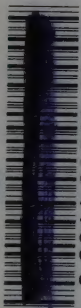


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THE BIBLE STUDY UNION LESSONS  
THE COMPLETELY GRADED SERIES

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# The Story of Our Bible

BY  
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## INTRODUCTION

Back of the Bible lies a fascinating story; the story of the men and women who wrote it. They were human beings like ourselves, with their hopes and fears, their dreams and their longings. More than that, they were noble, heroic men and women, whose supreme aim was to help others, by bringing to them the glad tidings of the living God. They sought to accomplish this aim first of all through personal contact and teaching, and then as a secondary method, through writings. Each book in the Bible, therefore, was written for a definite purpose, and originally played an important part in some great hero's life-battle for God and for the right. Sometimes the book itself describes or suggests the circumstances which called it forth, and the special purpose for which it was written. Sometimes we must infer the story from references found in other books, and by our knowledge of ancient life and customs. For centuries men have been patiently searching for these facts. As a result of their work it is now possible to tell the story of the Bible as a whole; how its various books came to be written and what results they achieved; and finally how these books were preserved through the centuries and thus handed down to us. This is the story which will be told in the following pages.

We shall begin with the story of the New Testament although chronologically, it might seem that we should begin with the Old. It is easier to understand the conditions in which the New Testament arose, for the very reason that they are more like those of modern life; and this study of the origin of the New Testament will give us just the key we need with which to approach the Old Testament.

This study should accomplish two things. It should

help us first to understand the Bible more clearly, and to appreciate more deeply its value. In the second place, even if for some conceivable reason, we could never again read the actual words of the Bible, this story of the men who wrote it, should in itself be a supreme inspiration to heroic living, and should help to satisfy our deepest spiritual needs.



# THE STORY OF OUR BIBLE

## CHAPTER I

### THE STORY OF TERTIUS, A CHRISTIAN SCRIBE

ROM. 16: 1-27

(Date of writing about 56 A. D.)

#### THE EARLIEST NEW TESTAMENT WRITINGS

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—every one knows that these are the first four books in the New Testament. We might naturally suppose that they were the first New Testament books to be written. As a matter of fact, the oldest part of the New Testament is not the Gospel of Matthew but the letters of the Apostle Paul. In the study which we are now undertaking we shall follow, in general, the chronological order of the various Biblical writings. The earliest letter of Paul was either I. Thessalonians or Galatians. We shall study these two letters in chapter two. In the present chapter, we begin our study with a short letter, which is not indeed among the earliest of Paul's writings, but which illustrates very well the method by which all his letters were written. It is found in the sixteenth chapter of Romans.

#### AN APOSTLE DICTATING A LETTER

We begin with a scene from the life of the Apostle Paul. He is dictating a letter, in his room at the house of a man named Gaius in the city of Corinth. He has been preaching in Corinth for some months, and has won many converts. For some time he has been planning to send a letter to a group of Christians in another city. Paul himself seems to have been somewhat awkward with the pen; he cannot afford to hire a professional

scribe, however; so he has inquired whether there is a good writer among the converts there at Corinth. Some one has told him about a certain man named Tertius, and Paul has sent for him. Would Tertius be kind enough to come to the house of Gaius, some time this week and write a letter from Paul's dictation? Tertius has answered that he would be glad indeed to do so. His heart is warm with his new love for Christ, of whom Paul has told him, and he feels deep gratitude toward Paul himself, through whose tender, burning words he first found God. So Tertius has arranged to call at Paul's room, to act as his scribe.

#### ANCIENT WRITING MATERIALS AND STYLES OF WRITING

Before coming at the appointed hour, Tertius had to provide himself with writing material. Short letters were often written on wax tablets. Such a tablet consisted of two wooden frames, folding together like an old-fashioned pair of slates. The soft yielding wax was packed into each frame, and its surface made level and smooth. The writing was done with a sharp metal pencil or stylus by means of which the characters could be scratched on the wax. Tertius may have provided himself with several of these tablets; but as Paul probably wished to send a letter of considerable length, he doubtless bought several sheets of papyrus. Caspar René Gregory, a noted German scholar, gives the following description of papyrus: "It is a plant that one can often find in parks and botanical gardens. In the parks, it is four or five feet high. If I am not mistaken I saw it fifteen feet high at the Arethusa Spring at Syracuse. It has a three-cornered stem, and the sides are covered by a thin green skin. There are no joints. At the top is a large inverted tassel of grass-like hair like the crest of a helmet. The great place for papyrus in ancient times was Egypt, although European rivers, for example the Anapo near Syracuse, also produced it. The pith stem was cut crosswise into lengths of eight or ten inches,

according to wish, and then cut lengthwise into thin flat strips like tape. These tape-like strips were laid vertically to the edge of the table side by side, till there were enough for a leaf of the desired size. Then a layer of paste or glue was spread over them, and other strips laid across, that is to say horizontally, running parallel with the edge of the table. These leaves were pressed, so that the strips should all stick flat together, and left to dry. The drying is easy in Egypt. Things dry almost before they have come to perceive that they were wet. The dried leaves were a trifle rough. For nice paper the surface was then smoothed off, it may be with pumice-stone, or it was hammered. It was a very good surface to write upon, not unlike birch bark, which many readers will know from the Adirondacks or Maine or Canada."

It is an interesting fact that our word "paper," is derived from this word "papyrus." The leaves which Tertius bought were doubtless of a uniform size, with neatly trimmed edges. If Paul told him that he expected to send a long letter, he may have bought a blank roll. If so, that roll was made by pasting several sheets together, by the edges. Tertius began to write on the left-hand end of the roll. He wrote in columns about as broad as a finger is long. Professional scribes were paid by the line, and the usual rule was to make each line about as long as the average line of a modern printed page. Longer lines would have been harder to read.

Tertius also provided himself with pens and ink. His pens were made of reeds, pointed and split like our pens today. He doubtless prepared three or four of them, so as not to keep Paul waiting while he mended pens. His ink was made of oak-galls, and was probably brownish in color, and paler and less clear than ours. He kept it in a glass or metal bottle, stoppered with wax. All these articles he carried in his girdle, which, in those days, served for a pocket.

Arriving at the house of Gaius, Tertius takes his seat at the writing table. Paul reclines on a couch, or perhaps in his enthusiastic manner walks back and forth across

the room. As he rapidly dictates the sentences, Tertius writes them down as best he can. It is quite possible that Tertius took down Paul's words in shorthand, using cheap papyrus for that purpose. A very good system of shorthand had been invented and was widely used. He probably wrote the final copy of the letter in a "cursive" or "running" style of hand writing, which was different from the letters which were used in permanent books, just as our script is different from print. Unlike our writing or printing, there were no spaces between the words in Tertius' letter, and almost no punctuation marks.

#### A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION FOR PHOEBE OF CENCHREÆ

Paul probably dictated two letters to Tertius. The first was a long one to the Christians at Rome. We will have its story in chapter four. The second was only a short note. In after years, the two were copied by other writers on one roll, and in that way became a single letter, and we now have the shorter one as the sixteenth chapter of our "Epistle to the Romans." It was really a note of introduction for a certain woman named Phœbe, a prominent Christian worker in the little sea port of Cenchreæ, just across the isthmus, ten miles from Corinth. She was going to Ephesus on business, and Paul wrote this letter for her to give to friends of his among the Christians there. As a stranger in the city, and a woman, she would greatly appreciate their hospitality. Paul had recently spent three years in Ephesus, and had many dear friends there; so in the letter for Phœbe, he sent greetings to many of them, just as in our letters we ask to be "remembered" to various friends. In the midst of these greetings, there seems to have been a slight interruption. Perhaps a visitor came in and talked a little while with Paul. Possibly Gaius and other friends were in the room. Meanwhile Tertius, as he sits there waiting, thinks "I know some of the people to whom Paul is writing; I used to know Prisca and



Aquila, when they made tents here in Corinth. [Rom. 16:3 and see Acts 18:1-3.] I believe I'll just put in a friendly word for them." So he writes, "I, Tertius, who am writing the letter, salute you in the Lord." Then the visitor goes out. Paul continues, "Gaius, my host, salutes you," and after a few closing words the letter is finished. A little later, it is rolled together as compactly as possible, tied with a cord, and sealed with a drop of wax. Tertius writes on it the address. To —, in the city of Ephesus, the Province of Asia. The next day Phœbe comes in and the letter is put in her hands. No doubt she thanks Paul warmly, as she bids him good-bye.

#### A MAN WHO PERFORMED AN HUMBLE SERVICE IN A NOBLE SPIRIT

It is not very much that we know about the scribe, who thus wrote the very first copy of one of Paul's letters, but what is known about him is intensely interesting. This Tertius was not a man of genius. He was not an intellectual giant, like Paul. Yet he could do something that Paul could not do—he could write a clear legible hand, and Paul needed his help. Had it not been for this man Paul might not have been able to write his letter. But Tertius performed the needed service; and he did it, not for sake of money or fame, but because he loved the Master. "I, Tertius, . . . salute you in the Lord." These last three words show that he was a Christian and that he was proud of his membership in the Christian church. Moreover, he was quick to seize opportunities to extend his Christian influence. "I salute you in the Lord." "I'm with you," Tertius seems to say, "Don't forget I'm on your side, too." Some days after the writing of this letter, Phœbe landed at the docks in the harbor at Ephesus, and went to the house which Paul had mentioned. When the letter was opened and passed around among Paul's friends, we can easily imagine their pleasant surprise when they came to that sentence from Tertius. "Look, Aquila,"

said Prisca, "do you remember Tertius? Well, it was Tertius to whom Paul dictated this letter, and Tertius himself has put in a special greeting for us. 'I, Tertius, salute you in the Lord.' " And Aquila may have answered, as he went on with his tent making, "Really, I am almost as glad to receive that greeting from Tertius, as I am to hear from Paul himself."



TWO VIEWS OF AN ANCIENT PAPYRUS LETTER, SHOWING  
STRINGS AND CLAY SEAL. FOUND AT ASSUAN, EGYPT.





## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. What were some personal qualities which would be desirable in a secretary or stenographer, such as Tertius?

2. Do you think Tertius possessed them? If so, why?

3. What were some faults and mistakes which a secretary might easily make with the writing materials and writing customs of those days?

4. How many persons were benefited by the kindly helpfulness of Tertius?

5. What lesson is there in this story for us today, especially for the Christian of merely average talents?

6. In the space below, write down any further questions which may occur to you.

## TO SUM UP

1. Name the first four books of the New Testament.
2. What were really the earliest written New Testament books?
3. What writing material was used for letters, in Paul's day?
4. Describe the plant called papyrus.
5. How was writing material made from it?
6. What is the derivation of our word "paper"?

7. To whom did Paul address the letter of introduction which he wrote for Phœbe?

8. What were the circumstances which led to the writing of this letter?

9. Where in our Bibles is this letter found?

10. How did it happen to be placed just here?

11. Tell what is known about Tertius.

### SUGGESTED NOTEBOOK WORK

In large cities, where there are botanical gardens, the curator will often be willing to donate a damaged stalk of papyrus. A sheet of papyrus paper may be made from this, in accordance with the description given above. This may be inserted in your notebook. The strips should be wet, and the inside surfaces laid together. It may be necessary to wet the inside surfaces with mucilage.

If papyrus cannot be secured, you may be able to get some birch bark. Write on a sheet of birch bark, a few verses of Romans 16, in unspaced columns, such as Tertius would have written.

## CHAPTER II

### SOME LETTERS OF A MISSIONARY

#### GALATIANS AND I AND II THESSALONIANS

(Date of writing about 51 A. D.)

#### WHY PAUL WROTE LETTERS

The Apostle Paul was a great writer, yet he left only a few letters as his contribution to the world's literature. The reason is evident. He was a busy man. What with earning his own living by tent making, and his unwearying evangelistic efforts, he had no time to write books. His letters, on the other hand, were called forth by the practical needs of his work. He had laid out for himself a unique life task. He had planned, apparently, to carry the Gospel message around the entire coast of the Mediterranean Sea, or in other words, throughout the central portion of the Roman Empire. He would stop a few months or years in one of the leading cities, gathering and training converts and then go on to the next town, planting a church in each. These churches were to be centers from which Christianity would spread into the surrounding regions, and thus the entire Empire would eventually be Christianized. It was a stupendous undertaking. No one had ever dreamed of such a thing, hitherto. In fact up to the time of the Roman empire, it would have been physically impossible, for the lack of roads and ships, would have kept the missionary at home. Now, however, the Roman government had built good roads into the most remote provinces, and had swept the pirates from the sea, and the robbers from the public highways. There were passenger ships making regular trips between all the large cities on the coast of the Mediterranean. People traveled a great deal. The Greek language was every-

where understood. These facts made it possible for Paul to carry out his campaign with a large measure of success.

If this work, however, was to accomplish permanent results, it was necessary for Paul to find some way to follow up his own short personal campaigns in each city, otherwise the newly planted churches would wilt and die in the heat of persecution or temptation. There was nothing superficial in Paul. Whatever he undertook, he did thoroughly. So he devised two methods for looking after new converts. In the first place, he gradually built up a corps of lieutenants, men and women like Prisca and Aquila, Timothy, Silas, and Luke. Whenever he left a city, one of these assistants remained behind, if possible, to go on with the work. At frequent intervals, these helpers reported to him, wherever he happened to be. The second method of looking after his converts, was through letters. These he sent by his assistants, or by any messenger whom he could secure. Thus in addition to his missionary preaching, he was able to keep constantly in touch with all his previous converts; sympathizing with their perplexities and troubles; rebuking their wrong doings; and cheering them on in times of discouragement. As the number of churches grew, it is not surprising that Paul sometimes felt burdened by "that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches." (II Cor. 11:28).

#### THE LETTERS TO THESSALONICA

Of the letters of Paul which are preserved in our New Testament, the earliest are a group of three which were written in Corinth during his first visit there, namely, Galatians, and I and II Thessalonians. This visit should probably be dated sometime between the autumn of 50 A.D., and the spring of 52 A.D. When the first letter to the Thessalonians was written, Silas and Timothy had just come down from Macedonia to Corinth. As they appeared in the low doorway of the tent-maker's shop, where Paul and Prisca and Aquila were at work,

they received a royal welcome. Paul had been having a fit of the blues. His work in Athens just before coming to Corinth, had seemed a total failure, and he was apparently succeeding no better in Corinth. He had been compelled to flee from Macedonia much sooner than he intended, and he was very anxious about his converts there, especially the Thessalonians. The travel-stained newcomers, however, brought good cheer. The Philippians had actually taken up a collection, and had sent the money to Paul through Silas. As for the Thessalonians, Timothy reported that in spite of the fact that they had been severely persecuted, they had proved themselves true Christians. At these good tidings, Paul's spirits rose with a bound. Immediately he sent the Thessalonians a letter praising them, and encouraging them to continue in the good way. The second letter was written a few weeks after the first. In their expectation that Christ would soon return to earth, some of the Thessalonians had ceased from their daily work. Paul explained to them that the longed-for return of the Master might be delayed, and urged them to return to their work. "If any will not work," he says, "neither let him eat." For the most part, the letters to the Thessalonians are letters of praise, rather than of reproof, and are filled with beautiful and tender expressions of Paul's love.

#### THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

The letter to the Galatians was written about the same time as I Thessalonians, perhaps even earlier. Messengers had just come to Paul, from the cities of southern Galatia, where he had founded churches. (Acts 13-14). There were four of these cities, namely Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. Since Paul's last visit, some Jewish-Christian teachers from Jerusalem had come among them, saying that the Gentile Christians, as well as the Jews, must observe the rites and ceremonies of the law of Moses, else they could not be saved. "Paul was mistaken," they said, "in telling



you that these rites are unnecessary. He was not one of the original twelve Apostles anyway. He never even saw Jesus while He was on earth." The messengers reported that many of the Galatians had believed what these men said, and that all the churches were in a turmoil over the question. Paul was deeply stirred and troubled by what he heard. He realized, of course, that these old ceremonies, in themselves, were not worth a controversy. It was a matter of no consequence whether they were observed or neglected. But the Jewish Christians taught that these things were an essential element in Christianity. Thus they made religion a burden and a bondage. Paul's religion, on the other hand, was a religion of freedom. His mission among the Gentiles was not to lay new burdens upon them, but to free them from their old burdens, by telling of a wondrous power from on high which would make all burdens light. We cannot wonder that Paul was angry, with a holy anger, when the very heart and core of his message was thus perverted, and when his whole work among the Galatians was being undone. It was to fight these "blind leaders of the blind," that he wrote his letter. It is in many respects the greatest letter he ever wrote. It is more like a firebrand than a letter. Every sentence, every line, either blazes with indignation, or quivers with the pleadings of love. He defends his own authority as a religious teacher. He declares that even though he never saw Jesus in the flesh, yet he has known him, in the spirit. He appeals to their own experience and to the teachings of the Old Testament, to prove that the Jewish rites are not essential, but that God gives His blessings freely to all, both to Jews and Gentiles, on the one condition of faith. In other words, men are not kept from God by the fact that they are not Jews, or by the fact that they have not performed a certain ceremonial rite. Only one thing can shut men away from God, their own wilful unbelief.

Handwritten text in Coptic script, consisting of approximately 15 lines. The script is a form of the Coptic alphabet used in Egypt. The text is written in a cursive style, with some characters appearing to be ligatures. The ink is dark, and the background of the papyrus is light-colored with some visible texture and minor staining.

Handwritten text in Coptic script, located at the bottom of the page. It appears to be a separate line or a continuation of the main text, written in a similar cursive style.

AN ANCIENT LETTER—PORTION OF A PAPYRUS FOUND AT  
ASSUAN, EGYPT.



## HOW PAUL'S LETTERS WERE RECEIVED

Suppose we follow this Galatian letter to its destination, as a good illustration of the history of all of Paul's letters. The same messengers who brought the news from Galatia to Paul, no doubt returned with his answer. After a short sea voyage from Cenchreæ to Ephesus, or Miletus, and a journey of a hundred miles or so along the Roman road into the interior of Asia Minor, they arrived at the city of Pisidian Antioch. They probably delivered the letter to an elder in the church there, who immediately sent word to all the Christians in the town to come to his house that night. "A letter from Paul!" the news was flashed very quickly from home to home. In the evening, the room is crowded. Amidst an eager silence, the elder begins to read. The characteristic sentences of the great Apostle bring back to the minds of the listeners the familiar tones and inflections of Paul's voice. After about an hour's reading the letter is finished. A half-suppressed sigh sweeps through the room, and there are some rather shame-faced glances. Here is a man who remembers that he called a fellow-disciple by a hard name the other day, because he was not observing the Jewish fast of the new moon. Here is a woman who has been saying rather unkind things about Paul himself. Finally one of the leaders rises, a man who has the confidence of all. "Brothers and sisters," he says, "Paul is right. I had begun to observe these Jewish ordinances, like most of you here; but I, for one, will do so no more. These things only cultivate self-righteousness and pride. It is through God's free grace that we are saved." At this, one after another rises and declares himself on Paul's side. There is not a person in that room, who has not gained a new insight into the beauty of the Christian life.

The next day the letter was probably taken to Iconium, twenty-five miles distant, where in the evening it was read to the assembled disciples just as in Antioch. The next evening it was read in Lystra, and finally in Derbe. The disciples in Derbe probably kept it until they could

make a copy of it; copies were likewise made in each of the other towns. In their future meetings, they would read and reread these copies, until the favorite parts became finger marked, and the papyrus became ragged and torn. Then new copies would be made. Some of the members would make private copies for themselves. Thus Paul's influence lived on from year to year, and from generation to generation.



## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. General topic: Paul's characteristics as a worker. Was he thorough? Was he over-thorough?

(a) The map at the beginning of this book is drawn on the scale of about 212 miles to the inch. How far was Paul extending his influence to the east and north of Corinth, in the period covered by this lesson?

(b) What did Paul probably succeed in accomplishing through his letter to the Christians in Thessalonica?

(c) Suppose Paul had not protested against the ideas of the Jewish Christians what harm would have come to the religious life of his Galatian converts?

(d) With all his other work, how did Paul find time to dictate the letter to the Galatians?

2. How this Lesson throws light on the Bible.

(a) Explain why the Thessalonians needed the advice contained in I Thess. 4:11-12.

(b) Explain what Paul means by being "entangled in a yoke of bondage." See Gal. 5:1.

(c) If you have time, read I. Thessalonians entirely through, at a single sitting; and write questions in the space below, regarding any sentence that you do not understand.

## TO SUM UP

1. In what ways did Paul keep in touch with his converts in the various cities where he founded churches?
2. How had the Roman government made it possible for him to accomplish so much as a traveling missionary?
3. What other fact contributed to Paul's success?
4. What good news did Timothy bring from Thessalonica to Paul at Corinth?
5. Who were the Galatians?
6. What was Paul's purpose in writing Galatians?
7. What was his purpose in writing I Thessalonians?
8. What was the purpose of II Thessalonians?
9. About when were these letters written?
10. Tell what happened when a letter from Paul was received by one of his Churches.
11. What became of the letter when it had been read?

# CHAPTER III

## WINNING BACK FAITHLESS CONVERTS

### TROUBLE IN THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

Date, about 55 A. D.

#### PAUL'S FOUR LETTERS TO THE CORINTHIANS

"Four Letters!" some one may object; "We have heard about First and Second Corinthians, but never of Third Corinthians or Fourth." Yet it is now generally agreed that Paul wrote four letters to the Christians in Corinth, and probably all four of them are in our Bible. This series of letters was begun during the last few months of Paul's stay in Ephesus. He had come to that city in the autumn of 52 A.D., soon after leaving Corinth, where he wrote the letters described in the previous chapter. He had taken up an exceedingly active missionary campaign, which continued during three eventful years, and brought to him many anxious hours. At times, just as in Corinth, he ran short of money and nearly starved. His clothes grew shabby and worn. He was thrown out of his lodgings because he could not pay the rent. With all this, his preaching was so successful, that he won a large number of converts. This aroused the hatred of both the Jews and the heathen Greeks and he was nearly killed in the persecution which followed. It was just as this strenuous career in Ephesus was drawing toward its climax, that news came to Paul of trouble among his converts in Corinth. The story of the correspondence which at once began between the Corinthians and Paul, and which lasted about a year, is well-nigh as exciting as anything which happened in Ephesus.

## THE FIRST LETTER

The first of these four letters was called out by a scandal in the Corinthian Church. Word was brought to Paul by friends who happened to come to Ephesus, that the Christians in the former city had received into the church a man who was openly living an immoral life. It seems that he had married his father's wife, that is, his own stepmother. Paul, of course, was shocked, and wrote a short but emphatic note protesting that this man should never have been taken into the church, and should at once be expelled, unless he would repent of his wrongdoing, and cease from his evil life. It was formerly believed that this note was lost. Modern scholars, however, have perhaps discovered it in what is now II Cor. 6:14—7:1. We have already seen how the letter for Phœbe was added to the letter to the Romans. Apparently this short note to the Corinthians has found its way into the middle of a longer letter. Perhaps some later scribe intended to copy it at the end, but accidentally disarranged the leaves of papyrus on which he was writing, and thus inserted it by mistake in its present position. If so, then the note began as follows: "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement hath a temple of God with idols?" These short crisp sentences are like blows of the fist. They must have awakened some, at least, of the Corinthians, to a realization of the mistakes which they had made, and must have helped to recall them to their senses.

## OTHER SHORTCOMINGS OF THE CORINTHIANS

After sending this note, Paul received further information regarding the state of affairs at Corinth. It was a discouraging situation in many ways. These Corinthian Christians were full of religious enthusiasm, but their everyday conduct was far from ideal. Many of them

before their conversion, had been thieves, swindlers, drunkards and grossly immoral. It is not surprising, therefore, that even after their conversion, their standards of conduct were somewhat low. There were also certain persons in Corinth who ridiculed the Christian belief in a life after death when men will be punished or rewarded, according to their deeds on earth. "Let us eat, drink and be merry," these scoffers seemed to say. "Let us indulge ourselves as we please for tomorrow we die." Some of the Christians had been influenced by these arguments. Furthermore the church was torn with jealousies and quarrels. They had quarreled over the question, "who is the more eloquent preacher, Paul or Apollos" (Paul's friend and associate). They had quarreled over the matter of spiritual gifts. Each one claimed special honor for his own gift. This quarrelsome spirit led to disorders in their meetings. Those who spoke first, took up too much time. Often there would be several persons trying to speak at once. At their suppers, they broke up into little cliques, the members of each clique in a corner by themselves. Here would be a group of well-to-do people, who had brought a fine dinner, and were behaving like gluttons, while over on the other side of the room, would be certain poor persons who had been able to bring little or nothing, and who were hungry and embarrassed. Finally, what was perhaps more discouraging than anything else, the majority of the Corinthians including some of the worst offenders, were excessively proud and conceited. They would take advice from no one. They regarded themselves as already wellnigh perfect. When any of the wiser members attempted to remonstrate with them, they felt themselves insulted. In general they were behaving like spoiled children.

#### PAUL HANDLES THE SITUATION BOLDLY. HIS SECOND LETTER

Paul's second letter to this church, we have in the New Testament under the heading First Corinthians. It



was written some weeks after the real first letter. Paul had just received an answer to that letter, in which the Corinthians asked him how it would be possible to avoid associating with immoral persons unless they were to go out of the world altogether. It was a rather foolish question, and shows that they were trying to excuse themselves for their conduct. They also asked a number of other questions, as for example, whether it was ever right to eat meat which had been dedicated to an idol. In his second letter (I Corinthians), Paul gives practical commonsense answers to all their questions, and also goes very thoroughly into all the matters regarding which they needed instruction. This letter must have made a sensation. It was charged with spiritual electricity. Patiently, tactfully, but with absolute fearlessness, Paul discussed their errors and shortcomings. Two great purposes underlie the whole letter, first, to lift the Corinthians to a higher standard of morals, and secondly to inspire them with the Christian spirit of love. The greatest passage in the letter, is the chapter in praise of love, beginning with the words, "If I speak with the tongues of men or of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal." This is one of the noblest and most eloquent passages in all literature.

#### TRouble-MAKERS FROM OUTSIDE

This second letter would probably have accomplished its purpose had it not been that most unfortunately, some of Paul's enemies among the Jewish Christians, came to Corinth just at this time. These persons were perhaps the very men who had tried to persuade the Galatians to observe the Jewish law. They followed the same course in Corinth, except that they attacked Paul himself, more bitterly. "Do you know who this man is?" they asked. "Did he bring any letters of recommendation from the mother-church at Jerusalem?" They found a ready hearing for these insinuations among those whose conduct Paul had just rebuked. Getting together a group of them, they poured into their willing ears some

such tale as follows. "You Corinthians have been outrageously deceived. This man told you that he was an apostle of Christ. He is always bragging about himself, and claiming to be some great personage. In reality he is a rank imposter. He admits that he never knew Christ while He was on earth, as the other apostles did. Moreover, his teaching is false. He says that you Gentile Christians do not need to keep the law which God revealed to Moses. What a blasphemy to tell men that they do not need to obey God's law! What then is there to hinder any man committing any sin he may choose? The fellow knows that his doctrines lead directly to this dreadful conclusion, although he is too clever to admit it. He throws a veil over his real meaning. Do you ask what he is doing all this for? Why he wants your money. True, he would not accept any money from you for his support, but that was merely in order to win your confidence. Is he not at this very time raising a great collection for the poor in Jerusalem? Do you suppose the poor will ever see that money? Really, the fellow is a scoundrel. He is not only a liar, he is a coward as well. His letters are bold and threatening to be sure, but when he is with you does he dare to carry out his threats? Soon after he first pretended to be converted, he showed himself a coward; we heard all about it. He was preaching in Damascus, and some of the unbelieving Jews threatened to kill him. There really was no danger at all, yet he ran from the city in terror. Why even his bodily presence is weak, and his manner of speech is contemptible." In their desperate attempt to blacken Paul's character, these Jews seem to have even referred to a chronic illness to which Paul was subject, and which caused him much pain and annoyance. Perhaps this disease was epilepsy. The Jews always regarded any disease and especially nervous weaknesses of this kind, as the result of some previous sin and therefore evidence of a sinful character. This affliction was sent upon Paul, so the Corinthians were told, as a punishment of his evil deeds. There was just enough truth in some of

these statements to make an impression on the Corinthians. Even those who had been most loyal to Paul, found it hard to keep unshaken faith in him. When Paul himself heard what was being said about him, he was of course deeply grieved and hurt and also filled with anxious concern for the Corinthians themselves. So he dropped his work in Ephesus and made a flying visit to Corinth, thinking that he could quickly rally his old friends about him. It was a sorrowful visit, however. Scarcely any one welcomed him. At every door, he was received with cold and suspicious glances. He was even publicly insulted at a gathering of the church members, and the man who committed the outrage was not rebuked; on the contrary, the majority of those present seemed to approve. So almost heart broken, Paul sailed back to Ephesus.

#### HOW PAUL REGAINED THE CONFIDENCE OF THE CORINTHIANS.

##### THE THIRD LETTER

Nevertheless this painful visit was not wholly a failure. After Paul had gone the Corinthians began to be ashamed of themselves. When his associate Titus came to them from Ephesus, some two or three weeks later, with a letter from the apostle, they were already in a better frame of mind. This was Paul's third letter to them. We have this letter, or a part of it, in the New Testament, at the end of what is now called Second Corinthians (Chapters 10-13). It was doubtless added here by some one who was making a copy of Paul's letters. It was a very severe letter. Part of it seems never to have been made public, probably because it mentioned the name of the man who had insulted Paul. In the part which has been handed down to us, Paul pleads for a fair hearing. He is fighting now with his back to the wall. With biting irony, and splendid eloquence, he defends his character and mission. He appeals to his past record of toil and sacrifice for the cause of Christ. Referring to the Jewish Christians, he asks: "Are they ministers

of Christ? (I speak as one beside himself), I am more; in labors more abundantly, in prisons more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft." Then follows a most remarkable and moving story of what he had endured and achieved for Christ. (II Cor. 11:23-33). In answer to the charge that his attacks of bodily sickness were sent upon him as a punishment, he says that this "thorn in the flesh" was really sent to him in connection with his wonderful visions and revelations from the Lord, lest he should be tempted by them to be unduly proud. Moreover, it had really been one of his greatest blessings for through it he had learned that the power of God was made perfect in human weakness. "Most gladly therefore, will I rather boast in my weaknesses,"—"for when I am weak, then am I strong." This letter went home like an arrow to its mark. It would seem that the whole assembly broke down in weeping, when it was read. To think that instead of giving this great souled man their truest love, they had pointed the finger of scorn at even those physical sufferings which should have awakened their deepest sympathy! They begged Titus to hurry back to Paul and tell him they were sorry, and were longing for his forgiveness. They also severely reprimanded the man who had been guilty of the act of insult.

#### PAUL'S FOURTH LETTER: THE HAPPY RECONCILIATION

Meanwhile, Paul's tender heart had been smiting him. How would they take his letter? Had he written too severely? Would they be alienated from him altogether? Would Titus never come back? Unfortunately it had been understood that Titus was to return by way of Macedonia. So at last, when Paul could endure the delay no longer, he closed his work at Ephesus, and went to Troas, where the Macedonian boats came in. Not finding Titus there, he went on across the sea, and in one of the cities of Macedonia, he found the man he was looking for. How about it Titus? Tell us quickly. What news from Corinth? Eagerly and joyously Titus pours out his welcome news. Then in overflowing

happiness, Paul writes one more letter, a fourth, which we have as II Cor. 1, 1—6:13; 7:2-9. He sends it back post haste, with Titus, promising to come himself very soon. In this letter Paul fairly sings his tenderness and his gratitude to God. He begs the Corinthians not to deal too severely with the member who had wronged him, but rather to forgive and comfort him, lest he should be "swallowed up with his overmuch sorrow."

To dispel any lingering perplexities which the Jewish Christians may have suggested to their minds, he burst forth into one final, splendid defence of himself, and his gospel. He does not need "letters of recommendation," he says, "Ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God." In answer to the charge that he had not known Jesus while He was on earth, Paul says, "Wherefore, henceforth, I will know no man after the flesh; even though I have known Christ after the flesh, yet now I will know Him, so, no more." That is, Paul does know something of the events in the earthly life of Jesus, through his acquaintance with Peter, and James, the Lord's brother; it is possible that he had even seen Jesus, when He was in Jerusalem, but He is resolved to make use of this knowledge even less in the future than in the past. He will appeal rather to his knowledge of the living Christ, who "shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God."

This letter was delivered in due time. The Corinthians were not expecting it so soon, for they supposed that Paul was still in Ephesus. When Titus gave it into their hands, how quickly they tore open the seal, and scanned its closely written lines. Quickly the word was passed around among all the members; "A letter from Paul already! He has forgiven everything." And then they began to count the days before Paul should come in person once more. The letters had accomplished their purpose. The Corinthian Church had been saved for Paul, and for the cause of Christ.



# QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

(Choose any Five)

1. "Just as this career in Ephesus was drawing towards its climax, the news came to Paul of trouble in Corinth." How long do you think this trouble may have been going on?
2. What do you think was the most dangerous tendency among the Corinthians?
3. Why were the Corinthians so ready to listen to the charges of the Jewish Christians?
4. When the Jewish Christians began to make these charges, what should the Corinthians have said?
5. Mention one or two statements of the Jewish Christians regarding Paul, which were partially true?
6. What would have been the effect on the characters of the Corinthians, if their confidence in Paul had been entirely destroyed?
7. In the light of the above story, explain the following passages.  
(a) I Cor. 4:8-13. To what experience of his own, is Paul here referring?

(b) I Cor. 5:9. To what letter does Paul here allude?

(c) I Cor. 12:27-13:1. Why does Paul break out in praise of love in connection with the subject of spiritual gifts?

(d) I Cor. 2:4. To what letter does Paul here allude?

8. Read as much as you can in either First or Second Corinthians. Mention any passages which you like particularly well.

### TO SUM UP

1. What evil tendencies began to manifest themselves among the Corinthians, after Paul had been absent from them for some time?

2. Describe briefly the first letter which Paul wrote to them.

3. What were Paul's two chief aims, in his second letter to the Corinthians?

4. What is the name of this letter, in the New Testament?

5. What outsiders tried to break down the confidence of the Corinthians, in Paul's personal character?

6. How did Paul defend himself?

7. How was he received when he made them a short visit?

8. How did Paul reply to the charges of the Jewish Christians, in his third letter?

9. In what part of the New Testament is this letter to be found?

10. What was the effect of this letter?

11. Where was Paul when he wrote his fourth letter to the Corinthians?

12. What was his purpose in writing it?
13. In what part of the New Testament is it found?
14. What was the approximate date when this Corinthian correspondence began, and about how long did it continue?

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR THE NOTEBOOK

Take two cheap copies of the New Testament (obtainable for 5 or 10 cents each), and clip out Paul's first, second, third, and fourth letters to the Corinthians, pasting them into the notebook in proper order, and with proper title and date. Two copies are necessary, because the clippings are printed on two sides, and one side must be pasted to the notebook leaf.

CHAPTER IV  
THE PLANS OF A GREAT RELIGIOUS  
STATESMAN  
PAUL'S LETTER TO ROME, AND LETTERS WRITTEN  
FROM ROME  
(Date 56—61 A. D.)

LOOKING WESTWARD FROM CORINTH:  
HOPES AND FOREBODINGS

When Paul sent his last letter from Macedonia to the Corinthians, his work in that part of the world was nearly completed. He had preached the Gospel in Damascus, in Antioch, in the cities of Galatia, in Ephesus, in Corinth, in the cities of Macedonia, and even as far as Illyricum, northwest of Macedonia. In most of these cities he had established churches, and thanks to his ceaseless care and effort, these churches were now strong and flourishing organizations. In accordance with his missionary plan, his eyes now turned to the great provinces of the west: to Rome, the mighty heart and metropolis of the whole empire, and beyond Rome, to distant Spain. Before he could embark on this new part of his enterprise, however, there was one duty which he felt that he must fulfil. We have seen that he had been having constant friction with certain Jewish-Christian teachers. They had done all in their power to hinder him in his work. They were evidently sincere in believing him to be a hypocrite, and a thoroughly bad man. There were, to be sure, a few of the Jewish-Christian leaders, Peter, for example, who believed in Paul; but a large number of the Christian Jews in the church in Jerusalem, and elsewhere, bitterly opposed him. Paul defended himself against their attacks with all his might. Yet it was a deep sorrow to him to be in conflict with men of his own

race, and especially with men who tried to follow the teaching of Christ, however imperfect their appreciation of Christianity may have been. He grieved over the growing bitterness between the Gentile Churches which he had founded, and the original mother-Church at Jerusalem, and he determined to do what he could to bring about a reconciliation. To this end, he had been gathering for a year or more, a great collection for the poor among the Christians at Jerusalem. (See I Cor. 16: 1-3; II Cor. 8-9). This had been suggested, originally, by Peter and other Jerusalem leaders who were friendly.

Paul took up the idea with enthusiasm, and his converts, everywhere, responded generously. When he finally reached Corinth, the money had all been gathered. He was to take it to Jerusalem, in company with some eight or nine men, representing the leading Gentile Churches. It was hoped that this kindly gift would not only help the poor, but would also win the hearts of the Jewish brothers. For Paul, this journey was dangerous. In fact, Jerusalem was the most dangerous place in the world for him. If the Jewish Christians were in conflict with him, how much more, the unbelieving Jews! They regarded him as a renegade and a traitor. Many of his friends besought him not to undertake the journey. If he should once enter Jerusalem, would he ever leave it alive? Would he ever see the fulfilment of his dreams? Would he ever really preach the Gospel in Rome?

#### A LETTER TO THE CHRISTIANS IN ROME

With this eager ambition to go to Rome, and mingled with it, this anxious foreboding as to the outcome of his visit to Jerusalem, Paul's spirit must have chafed within him, as he watched the white winged ships setting sail for Italy from the harbor at Corinth. Fortunately, before he left this city, he met with an acquaintance who was going to Rome, and who could deliver a letter to the Christians there; so Paul determined to write to them. If he were successful in carrying out his plans, the letter would prepare the way for his coming. If on the other



hand, it should prove to be the Lord's will that he die in Jerusalem, he would have spoken his message at least through this letter, in the great metropolis of the world. It was probably dictated to Tertius, like the note for Phœbe. It is the longest of his letters. Apparently, he had a little more leisure than usual, during these closing days at Corinth. He tells the Romans how for a long time he has been planning to come and visit them and "be set forward by them" to Spain. (Rom. 1: 13-15; 15: 22-28). He gives them a full statement of the Gospel message as he preached it. The entire human race, he says, both Jews and Gentiles, is in deep need of salvation from sin. We have a knowledge of God's will, to be sure, both in our consciences, and in the law of Moses, but no man, in his own unaided strength, can obey God's law. We are too weak and sinful. God has therefore sent His Son to be our Saviour. If we will but trust Him, His Spirit will transform our characters. A new love will be kindled in our hearts which will manifest itself in a life of righteousness and helpfulness. In a touching closing paragraph, Paul refers again to his hopes and fears, and asks the Roman Christians to pray for him, "that I may be delivered from them that are disobedient in Judea, and that my gift which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable to Christ's people there; that I may come to you in joy through the will of God, and together with you find rest." (Rom. 15: 30-33).

### ROME AT LAST — BUT A PRISONER

Paul's prayer was answered, but only in part. He did come to Rome, but not until three years later, and then only as a prisoner, in the custody of a Roman centurion. He had barely been in Jerusalem a week or so, when he was mobbed by the Jews in the temple court, and nearly killed. Rescued by Roman soldiers, he was sent to Cæsarea for trial. After his case had dragged along through two years marked by vexatious delays, he exercised his right as a Roman citizen and appealed to Cæsar, and was sent to Rome for trial. After an event-

ful voyage, and a shipwreck which nearly cost him his life, he reached Rome, in chains. His heart must have beat fast, as for the first time he walked along the streets of the famous city, the capital of the world. Yet what a disappointment! He was naturally so full of energy, and he had planned such great things. Had he been free, how quickly he would have explored the city and all that region! What an impetus he would have given to the Christian movement there! Instead of that, however, he must sit, day after day, chained to a soldier. Nevertheless, Paul was not the man to mope and whine. He always proceeded cheerfully to make the best of things; and being granted the privilege, somewhat unusual for a prisoner, of living in his own hired house, he was able to do much good service for the cause of Christ. He could talk with those who came to see him. Through these visitors, he could send letters far and wide.

Each of these avenues of influence is illustrated in the story of two men who set out from Paul's lodgings one day, to take ship for Asia Minor. The older of the two was one of Paul's lieutenants named Tychicus. Paul was sending him to certain churches in the province of Asia, east of Ephesus, especially the church in the town of Colossæ. Paul himself had never visited this district. The young man with Tychicus was a runaway slave named Onesimus. He had stolen money from his master, and had fled to Rome. Some friend of Paul's had found him wandering about the city, friendless and disconsolate, and had brought him to the apostle. Through Paul's influence he became a Christian, and when at last he told his whole story, it came out that he had belonged to an old friend and convert of Paul himself, a man named Philemon, who was living at that time in Colossæ. So Paul said to the young man, "Onesimus, why don't you go back to your old master, with Tychicus here? Surely it is providential that he is just about to set sail for that very city, Colossæ. I will write a letter for you to take to Philemon, and I am sure he will forgive you." So Paul wrote a kindly, courteous note, the "Epistle to

Philemon." In this letter he shows himself a true Christian gentleman. (Read Philemon, verses 8-10.) He also wrote two letters for Tychicus to deliver. One was addressed to the Christians in Colossæ, and is known to us as "The Epistle to the Colossians." The other is called in the New Testament, "The Epistle to the Ephesians," but was probably a circular letter intended for all the churches in that region. In these letters, Paul says to his readers that love for Christ should be the supreme motive of their lives. "Seek the things that are above, where Christ is. . . . Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth." (Col. 3:1-21). With these letters therefore, the two men set out together. When they reached Colossæ, Onesimus was doubtless received back into Philemon's household, "no longer as a servant, but as more than a servant, a brother beloved"; and wherever Tychicus went he had only to say the magic word, "A letter from Paul," to be sure of the most cordial welcome.

### THE DEEPENING SHADOWS

Our knowledge of the closing scenes of Paul's life is very fragmentary. It seems unlikely that he ever carried out his ambition to go to Spain. He was finally put to death by order of the Roman emperor Nero. Our chief source of information regarding the course of events during this period is from his letter to the Philippians. This was a letter thanking his old friends in Philippi for a gift of money. Prisoners, in those days, were not supported by the government. Their food and clothing and other necessities had to be provided by friends. When Paul first reached Rome, he seems to have been well supplied with money, through the generosity of the churches. For two years he was able to rent a house in which he was held as a prisoner. But alas for poor human nature, it is so easy to forget an absent friend, no matter how dear he has been to us. The churches were busy with their own affairs, and gradually Paul began to suffer from want. No doubt he had to give up



THE TRADITIONAL HOUSE OF ST. PAUL IN ROME.





his lodgings, and he was then thrown into some Roman dungeon. Probably he even suffered from cold and hunger. Just as his suffering was growing acute, however, there came a welcome visitor. A messenger from the Philippian Christians a man named Epaphroditus had sought him out. The Philippians had surmised that Paul would need more money, and had raised a considerable sum, and had bidden Epaphroditus to take it to him as quickly as possible. The messenger had been faithful to his trust. He had been sick on his way to Rome, but realizing that Paul's need might perhaps be urgent, he had kept steadily on his way. When he staggered into Paul's dungeon that day, he was in truth a very sick man, and he nearly died from the effects of his journey. Paul's heart was touched to the depths. *Here* was a church then, whose members had not forgotten him, here was a man who was willing to risk his life, to help him in his need. As soon as Epaphroditus was again able to travel, Paul sent him back to Philippi with a veritable love letter for his friends there. "Thank you, and God bless you" — is the keynote of it.

Still later, Paul wrote a letter or letters to his best loved lieutenant, Timothy. At this time, or earlier he also wrote a short note to Titus. These letters to Timothy and Titus have probably not been preserved in the form in which Paul wrote them. In later times, all of Paul's letters were read in the meetings of the Christians, and long sections seem to have been added to these short personal notes in order to make them more useful in public worship. There is one passage in II Timothy, however, which is almost certainly from Paul's own hand. "I am already being offered," he says, "and the time of my departure has come. I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." (II Tim. 4:6-8.) Evidently Paul has been condemned to die, and writes this letter to comfort Timothy, and to help him to say, "I also will try to fight the good fight no matter how hard a fight it may prove to be." When Timothy next visited one of the old

churches, Ephesus, perhaps, or Philippi, or Corinth, no doubt the people crowded around him as usual. "Have you a letter for us, from Paul," they said. But they read their answer in the look on Timothy's face. "No, comrades, there will be no more letters for you, from your old captain. All that remains now, is to treasure up his memory, and like him to 'fight the good fight, to finish our course, to keep the faith.'"

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. In going to Jerusalem with the money for the poor, was Paul following the main line of his purpose or was he switching to a side-track?

2. Discuss the question: "Resolved, that it would have been wiser for Paul to go directly from Corinth to Rome," or in other words, "Resolved that Paul's last visit to Jerusalem was a mistake."

3. What do you think was Paul's chief motive in appealing from the Roman authorities in Palestine, to Cæsar himself.

4. What did Paul hope for, when he reached Rome?

5. How many times in this lesson, do we find Paul cheerfully doing the "next best thing"?

6. Was it a mistake for Paul to attempt such a great life work, only to end in partial failure?

7. If not a mistake, explain why not.

8. Mention any favorite verse or passage, in the New Testament books treated in this chapter. Suggested readings: Romans 1, 12; Eph. 5; Phil. 4.

## TO SUM UP

1. Where was Paul when he wrote the letter to the Romans?
2. Why did he write this letter?
3. What is the general substance of the letter?
4. What was the outcome of his last visit to Jerusalem?
5. How did he finally reach Rome?
6. What means did he use, while a prisoner in Rome, to extend his influence?
7. What letters did he write while a prisoner in Rome?
8. What were his reasons for writing the following letters?
  - (a) Colossians?
  - (b) Ephesians?
  - (c) Philemon?
  - (d) Philippians?
9. Why were additions made after Paul's death to his letters to Timothy and Titus?
10. What was the outcome of Paul's appeal to Cæsar?

## CHAPTER V

### AN EYE WITNESS OF JESUS' ARREST

#### JOHN MARK AND HIS GOSPEL

(Written about 70 A. D.)

#### THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Next after the letters of Paul, the earliest New Testament writings were the three Gospels, now known as Mark, Mathew, and Luke. These books are in many ways very similar, and are therefore classed together. They are called the Synoptic Gospels. This word, "synoptic," means, "from the same point of view." In this chapter, we take up the story of the Gospel of Mark, which was written about ten or fifteen years after the death of Paul.

#### A BOY WHO TRIED TO WARN HIS MOTHER'S FRIEND

Among those present in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus was arrested, was probably a young man named John Mark. Earlier that evening Jesus had eaten supper with his disciples. The place of the supper was probably an upper room in Mark's home. The house belonged to Mark's mother, a widow named Mary. We can picture the scene. The family had been awakened not long after the departure of their guests, by a loud knocking at the street door. When Mary opened the door, she saw before her a crowd of men, carrying torches, and armed with swords and clubs. Their leader, who wore the garb of a priest, asked for Jesus of Nazareth. When they had assured themselves that Jesus was not in the house, they went away, grumbling and cursing. Mary hurried to her son, who had been awakened by the commotion, and told him that a wicked plot was on foot against the Master. "And they will go straight from



here to the Oil Press on the Mount of Olives," added Mary. "Judas knows that Jesus often sleeps there, and they will find Him there tonight." Springing from his mattress, and stopping only to wrap a linen sheet about him (for the night was chilly), Mark set out to warn Jesus. Hurrying out of the house, he was off through the dark narrow streets, without a moment's delay. He was young and strong, and he hoped to cover the two miles or so to the old olive orchard, sooner than the men with Judas. When, at last, however, he came breathless up the hill to the orchard gate, the torches were there ahead of him. By their glare, and by the light of the full moon, he could see Jesus' hands being tied; he saw the blow which cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest; finally he saw the disciples turn and run. After this the men set out with Jesus in the direction of the city. As they passed out the gate and started down the hill, Mark followed along behind, almost broken hearted that he had come too late. Drawing up a little too close, he was seen by one of the men, who turned and seized him, thinking that he was one of the disciples. Slipping out however, from the folds of the sheet which he was wearing, Mark left it in the man's hand, and fled away.

### TELLING THE STORY OF JESUS

A few weeks later, there was a gathering of men and women, mostly Galileans, in Mark's home, perhaps in that same upper room where Jesus had eaten the Last Supper. What wonderful events had happened since that tragic night, when Mark had sped across the Kidron valley on his errand of warning! Jesus had been crucified. And yet, He still lived! Every member of that little band in Mark's home, had been in His presence. They were a joyous company therefore. "Jesus is still alive, and will one day be the King of Israel." This was the thought which filled their minds. Their hopes were chiefly of the future, when that Kingdom was to be established, but they could not forget the past. How

they must have loved to rehearse together their memories of Jesus. One after another would tell of this incident or that. Among those who listened, with shining eyes, was Mark, sitting with his mother; and when they talked of Jesus' arrest, the young man could contain himself no longer. "I was there," he cried, and then, of course, he had to tell the story of his experience that night. The disciples were deeply interested, and for a special reason. The Jews claimed that Jesus could not be the Messiah, for He had been crucified. The disciples replied that Jesus died for the sins of others, even as was foretold in the Book of Isaiah: "He was bruised for our transgressions." Now this story of Mark helped to prove the truth of their belief; for Mark could testify that Jesus made no attempt to escape or to resist those who came to arrest Him. On the contrary, he "laid down His life," of his own free will. It was perhaps because he could give this testimony that Mark, in spite of his youth, quickly rose to prominence as a leader among the disciples. A few years later, he went with Paul, and with his uncle Barnabas, on a missionary tour. It was perhaps a decade or so later, that he became an assistant of Peter. We are told that he acted as Peter's interpreter. Peter himself spoke Aramaic, a dialect of Hebrew, the mother tongue of Jesus and of all the early disciples in Palestine. In preaching to Greek-speaking people, he would of course need an interpreter. In this missionary work Mark had many opportunities to tell his own story. In winning others to believe in Jesus the disciples found that one of their most effective arguments was the simple narrative of Jesus' life. Peter's missionary sermons seem to have been made up largely of reminiscences of his experiences with Jesus. Mark also would no doubt be called on many times to tell how he was present when Jesus was arrested, and how he saw Him "led as a lamb to the slaughter," for the sins of men. Doubtless, many a heart was touched, and many a disciple won. As new converts came into the churches, it was necessary to tell them over and over again, what

kind of a life Jesus had lived on earth. Those who could tell anecdotes about Him were called upon at their meetings. Some stories as for example, that of Mark, were especially popular; for they listened eagerly to every scrap of information regarding Jesus' self-sacrificing death.

#### A PRICELESS TREASURE IN DANGER OF BEING LOST

For the first few years after Jesus' death, it did not occur to the disciples that a written narrative of His life would ever be needed. They were for the most part, not familiar with books, or with their value. They were not looking forward to twenty centuries of Christian history. On the contrary they supposed that Jesus would return within a few years, at which time, "this present evil world" would pass away. In the next world they would need no books. For a long time therefore, the story of Jesus was handed down orally from teacher to pupil, and from friend to friend. Those who told these stories no doubt tried their best to be accurate. Human memory however is weak, and errors easily crept into these narratives. There was an unconscious tendency to over-emphasize some points, and to neglect others perhaps more important. As time went on, it became more difficult to correct such errors by the testimony of eye witnesses for death thinned the ranks of those who had been with Jesus. Many perished as martyrs. Peter himself was crucified by Nero. Finally the disciples began to realize that the facts regarding Jesus were in danger of being forgotten. Those eye witnesses therefore who still remained, were urged to write down their recollections. Written narratives were accordingly prepared, and were read at the church gatherings in place of stories told from memory. In the case of the more popular stories, as that of the Supper by the Sea, a number of different narratives were prepared by different men.

#### THE GOSPEL OF MARK

At this period in the history of the church, John Mark was probably living in Rome. Peter seems to have

spent his last days in that city, and Mark may have remained there. We may imagine that some friend of his spoke to him somewhat as follows: "Brother Mark, you were an intimate associate of the Apostle Peter; again and again you must have heard him tell of incidents of Jesus' life. You yourself saw Jesus arrested. You ought by all means to write these things down, before you forget them. We need such a book in our missionary work." So Mark wrote for the Roman Christians the book which we call the Gospel of Mark. It was largely a collection of the stories of Peter. To some extent it probably reproduced Peter's own language. Naturally enough, the chief character in it, next to Jesus was Peter. We even find in it the story of Peter's denial, which is doubtless just what honest, humble Peter would have wished. Throughout his book, Mark tried to be accurate. He seems to have had accurate information regarding all the more important events, but his sources of information were not always perfect. For example he did not know the exact order in which many of the events in Jesus' life occurred. He had heard Peter relating one anecdote or another in accordance with the needs of his hearers and he evidently set down these events in the order that seemed most probable. To some extent, in addition to what he remembered from Peter, he made use of narratives which had already been written, copying them into his book. Sometimes he copied two stories which he thought represented two distinct events, but which were really two different accounts of the same event. (Compare Mark 6:30-43 with Mark 8:1; 10.) At one important point in the story, however, he did not need to rely on the testimony of others. At the close of his account of Jesus' arrest, he added this sentence: "And a certain young man followed with him, having a linen cloth cast about him, and they laid hold on him; but he left the linen cloth and fled away naked." It is quite possible that he was an eye-witness of other events in that closing week, besides the arrest in Gethsemane. At any rate, his mother must have been in close touch with Jesus and the disciples, and a keen witted young man like Mark



could not have failed to know what was going on. As a result, his account of the closing days of Jesus' life is very full and complete. This life of Jesus by Mark, was so much better than any of the other narratives which had been written, that these others were no longer used and soon all copies seem to have been lost. Other important Gospels were written later, as we shall see, of which Matthew, Luke and John, have been preserved in our New Testament. These Gospels give us the sayings of Jesus which Mark for the most part omitted.

They also give us some very valuable additional information regarding Jesus' deeds, and the events in His life. These other writers, however, relied on Mark for the main body of their story of His deeds. As we shall see, Matthew and Luke copied into their Gospels practically the whole of Mark. It is to Mark, therefore, that we are chiefly indebted for our knowledge of the course of Jesus' life. And what a story he has told us! Not that Mark was a literary genius. His language is not particularly elegant. He simply told what he knew, in plain, straightforward sentences. But through him, we hear Peter's voice, telling us of his association with the Master. Through Mark, for example, we go with Peter and Jesus into Peter's lowly fisherman's cottage in Capernaum. Through Mark, we see the crowds gather around the cottage door, when the sun had set, and we see the many sick people restored to health by the healing touch of Jesus. Through Mark, we seem to hear the voice of Jesus calling to us, across the rippling waves of the lake, "Follow me." Countless multitudes, through Mark's story, have "left all," like Peter, to follow Jesus. Above all, what an influence has been wielded by Mark's story of Passion Week: from the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, to the betrayal, arrest, trial, crucifixion and resurrection. What would the Christian religion be without the story of the Cross? We may truly say that this story as told by Mark has created Christian history, and it remains today the supreme influence for the creation and development of Christian character.



QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. What is the explanation of the influence with this young man Mark, with his merely average ability, has exerted in the world?

2. Why is the story of Jesus' death such a power in changing the lives of men?

3. Would the story of Jesus' death be as effective as it now is, if we knew nothing of His earlier life?

4. Mention any favorite verse or chapter in Mark's Gospel. Suggested readings, Mark 14-16.

TO SUM UP

1. Who was the " young man " referred to in Mark 14:51-52, as following after Jesus from Gethsemane?

2. How did Mark probably happen to be an eye witness of the arrest of Jesus?

3. Why were the disciples especially interested in Mark's story of his experience, after Jesus' death and resurrection?

4. On what occasions did the disciples tell the story of the events in Jesus' life?

5. Why did they not immediately prepare a written narrative of these events?

6. As they passed on the story of these events from memory, what errors were likely to creep in?

7. When did the disciples begin to realize that a written narrative ought to be prepared?

8. How had it come about that Mark was particularly well informed regarding Jesus' life?

9. What sources of information did he make use of besides his own recollections, and what he had heard from Peter?

10. Regarding what part of Jesus' life was he able to give the most complete account?

11. State briefly just what Mark's contribution is, to our knowledge of the life of Jesus?

## CHAPTER VI

### CHERISHING THE SAYINGS OF JESUS

#### THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

(Written about 80 A. D.)

#### A TEACHER WHO WROTE HIS MESSAGES ONLY ON MEN'S HEARTS

Only once in the Gospel records is there reference to Jesus' use of writing. When the Pharisees brought into his presence a sinful woman, and asked him what punishment should be inflicted upon her, he "stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground." (John 8:6.) Jesus, then, knew how to write, in spite of the fact that the scribes considered him uneducated. (John 7:15.) For the most part, however, He made little use of the art of writing. When He died He left behind him no books. This is all the more remarkable, when we consider His astonishing anticipations for the future. He believed that His life and work were introducing a new era in history, the triumph of God's kingdom in all the earth. This belief must have seemed to many like a beautiful but impossible dream. Yet when His disciples were discouraged because so few persons were being influenced by His message, He said to them, "The Kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed, which indeed is less than all seeds, but when it is grown . . . it becometh a tree." In this parable, Jesus implies that His influence will not be limited to the few disciples who can listen to his voice, but will be vastly extended, until the tiny mustard seed becomes a great tree. Yet it never seemed to occur to Jesus to hasten this extension of His influence by writing down His teachings. These sayings, and especially His parables, are classed with the world's supreme masterpieces of literary beauty. Yet He made

no effort to preserve them in written form. He was content that the beautiful form of His sayings should be forgotten. He did not even urge His disciples to commit His words to memory. His great injunction, was not "remember" but "do." His chief desire was that they should take His truth to heart, and practice it in their lives. "Every one that heareth these words of mine, and *doeth* them, shall be likened unto a wise man." With sublime faith, He was only anxious that His truth should be planted in the hearts of living men; thus, He believed, it would be transmitted through them to others, until at last the Kingdom should triumph on the earth.

#### KEEPING IN MEMORY THE MASTER'S WORDS

Nevertheless, Jesus' disciples from the very beginning were careful to memorize word for word as many of His sayings as possible. This was in harmony with the customs and ideas of that age. In Judea of old, as in China up to recent years, the chief business of pupils in school was to commit their lessons to memory. Every Jewish rabbi of that day had his circle of pupils, who strove to store away in their minds every syllable of his utterances. "A good pupil," says one of their proverbs, "is like a cistern lined with mortar, from which not a drop of water can leak out." There were many such pupils, and their feats of memory were truly astonishing. An enormous mass of Rabbinic teaching, much of it exceedingly dull and uninteresting, was handed down through centuries of oral tradition, with very few mistakes, and may now be found in the Jewish book, The Talmud. So likewise, the disciples of Jesus were able to remember almost the exact words of many of their Master's more important sayings. No doubt in their leisure hours they repeated them to one another, and helped to refresh each other's memories. Surely no utterances were ever easier to remember. The difficult thing would have been to forget them. His sentences were short and crisp. His figures of speech were homely and striking. He loved proverbs and paradoxes. "Let not thy right hand know

what thy left hand doeth." "He that would save his life shall lose it." "He that loseth his life shall find it." Such sayings as these are unforgettable. They worked their way once for all into the very souls of men. Many of Jesus' sayings were poetical in form, and poetry is always easier to remember than prose. The following saying, for example, really consists of two stanzas of Hebrew poetry.

"Ask and it shall be given you;  
Seek, and ye shall find;  
Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

"For every one that asketh, receiveth;  
And he that seeketh, findeth;  
And to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

Note the parallelism in thought between the lines of each stanza. Finally, and best of all, Jesus loved to illustrate His meaning with stories, — and such stories! Each one was a perfect picture, not a single word lacking, not a single word too many. Certainly the disciples could have had little difficulty in remembering such stories as the Sower, The Hidden Treasure, The Lost Sheep, or The Good Samaritan. With what loving care they cherished these stories and all the sayings of Jesus, seeking to pass them on to others just as they first fell from their Master's lips. For years, perhaps for decades, after Jesus' death His teachings were handed down to new converts in oral form. They were repeated at the meetings of the disciples, just like the stories of His deeds and the events in His life, except that they were guarded even more carefully from omissions and mistakes.

#### THE FIRST WRITTEN COLLECTIONS OF THE WORDS OF JESUS

Notwithstanding all this care and effort, some errors began to creep into even this transmission of the teachings of Jesus. The disciples could not help remembering best, those sayings which they themselves best understood

and appreciated. Other sayings equally important, gradually faded from their minds, or else lived on in a more or less distorted form. Often alas, it would be the boldest, the noblest, the most original of the Great Teacher's utterances which would be the most imperfectly understood. As the image of a lovely face may be marred by flaws in a mirror, so the great thoughts of Jesus were sometimes imperfectly transmitted as a result of the moral weakness or the spiritual dullness of the disciples. A good example of this process of partial distortion may perhaps be found in Matt. 10:5-6. "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and charged them, saying Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." No doubt, Jesus regarded himself as specially called to save the "lost sheep of the house of Israel," and he may have advised his disciples on their first missionary tour not to attempt at that time to preach to Gentiles. But Jesus, Himself, both preached to Samaritans, and told the story of the good Samaritan; and we cannot believe that He ever commanded his disciples not to enter into any Samaritan city. This was merely the mistaken inference of some Jewish Christian who shared the prejudices of the average Jew, in his attitude toward the people of this despised and hated province, Samaria, and who was perhaps offended also by the Gentile missions of Peter and Paul. Doubtless this narrow minded Christian really believed that these missions among the Samaritans and among the Gentiles were contrary to the wishes of Jesus. As a result of these imperfections of character and memory, there came to be conflicting versions of the same saying. Disputes arose in the meetings of the disciples. Some one would say that Jesus taught such and such a thing; others would insist on a different wording and interpretation. The burning question would arise: what did Jesus really say regarding this matter? Thus it came about that written collections of Jesus' sayings began to be prepared. The most important of these collections was written by



the Apostle Matthew. He had been with Jesus almost from the beginning of his work. After Jesus' death he seems to have spent all his life in Judea, where naturally the sayings of Jesus were best remembered. Many copies of Matthew's collection were quickly made and distributed among the churches in Palestine. Since it was written in Aramaic, the mother-tongue of Jesus and His first disciples, it was at first of no use to Greek-speaking Christians. Before long, however, it was translated into Greek, and copies of this Greek version were widely distributed. Many a little group of new converts, who had never been able to hear the words of Jesus, except when some traveling apostle came to visit their church, were now able to read them for themselves.

### THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Thus there had come into existence two books about Jesus; first, Mark's story of His life (see Chapter five), and second, Matthew's collection of His sayings. Many churches had a copy of both, and a passage from each was frequently read at their regular meetings. Then came the thought, would it not be a good thing to combine these two books into one? "In one" they said, "we have a collection of Jesus' sayings, but it tells us very little as to the occasions when Jesus uttered them. In the other is a story of the events of Jesus life, but it tells us little concerning the words which He spoke." It was to meet the need for such a combination, that the book was written which we call the Gospel of Matthew. The name of the real author we do not know. He must have been a man of ability and education. He was a Christian Jew, and was particularly anxious to tell his story in such a way as to attract Jews. He was especially fond of pointing out how Old Testament prophecies had been fulfilled in the life of Jesus. Suppose we call him Matthew the Second. His book came to be known as Matthew's Gospel, because a large part of it consisted of extracts from Matthew's collection of sayings. In fitting these extracts into the frame work of Mark's story, he simply

used his own judgment. For example he found in the older collection, an address which was evidently spoken to Jesus' own disciples; on the other hand, he found in Mark's story, the account of how Jesus went up into a mountain, and chose twelve of His followers to be Apostles; but Mark said nothing about a sermon in this connection. In the new book, Matthew the Second inserted the address to the disciples just at this point. Thus it has come to pass that it is always called the Sermon on the Mount. Probably some of the passages which this author included were really spoken on other occasions, for example, the passage in Matt. 6:19-34, which bids us not to be anxious about daily bread, is not found in Luke's version of this sermon, (Luke 6:20-49), but appears further on in the book. The second Matthew, however, liked to group together the sayings of Jesus in long sermons, each of them bearing on a certain general subject. On the whole, these arrangements of his are very logical, and the various passages are skilfully fitted together. His version of the Sermon on the Mount, for example, will always hold a unique place in the hearts of men.

In addition to the older collection of sayings, and the Gospel of Mark, the second Matthew included in his book certain other stories. The most important are those of Jesus' birth and infancy (Matt. 1-2). No one knows where he found these stories. Until recently they were generally accepted as historical facts. Some scholars, however, regard them merely as popular traditions which grew up among Christians at a later time. We may leave this problem for professional scholars to solve. Fortunately for us, we need feel no uncertainty regarding the main facts of Jesus' life and teaching. Although the early disciples were human like ourselves, and had their faults and weaknesses, we owe them an incalculable debt. Thanks to the painstaking and loving care with which they wrote those simple, honest narratives, we may still look back through the centuries of forgetfulness and misunderstanding to the real Jesus.

The chief value of the Gospel of Matthew is its record of the sayings of Jesus. In the beatitudes, we may still find the secret of true happiness. In those heart-searching words which condemn the sinful thought as well as the sinful act, and in those others which insist that our prayer and our every act of worship shall be absolutely sincere, our eyes are opened to a new ideal of goodness and religion. Finally in those tender words about God's care for all His creatures, and especially for His human children, we may still learn to know our Heavenly Father whose love Jesus came to reveal.

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. General topic. How the good news of Christianity is transmitted to others who are ignorant of it.

(a) Suppose the Sermon on the Mount instead of being first preached by a living person, had been miraculously handed down from heaven in written form, would it have exerted much influence in the world? Give reasons.

(b) How could Jesus be sure that after His death, His teachings would not be wholly forgotten?

(c) What inference can we draw from the Gospel of Matthew regarding the character of the Apostle Matthew?

(d) What effect must have been produced in the characters of these disciples by constantly remembering and repeating to others, the sayings of Jesus?

(e) How is Christian truth transmitted to other persons, today?

2. If you have time, read the whole Sermon on the Mount. (Matt. 5-7). State what part of it you like the best.

## TO SUM UP

1. Why did not Jesus write down His sayings.
2. After His death how did new converts among the Christians learn what Jesus had taught?

3. Why were Jesus' sayings easy to remember?
4. How did it first come about that written collections of Jesus' sayings were made?
5. Mention one example of an erroneous report of what Jesus said.
6. By what disciple was the most important collection of Jesus' sayings prepared?
7. How does it happen that many passages in our Gospel of Matthew are closely similar to passages in the Gospel of Mark?
8. Why is it that the author of our Gospel of Matthew takes so much pains to show that Jesus' life was a fulfilment of Old Testament Prophecy?
9. What are some of the most important contributions of this Gospel to our knowledge of Jesus?

CHAPTER VII  
A COMPASSIONATE PHYSICIAN  
THE GOSPEL OF LUKE, AND THE BOOK OF ACTS  
(Written about 80-90 A. D.)

THE APOSTLE PAUL INQUIRING FOR A DOCTOR

Among the cities where important events took place in early Christian history we should not forget the little seaport town of Troas, on the northwestern coast of Asia Minor. Here Paul came with Silas and Timothy, at the beginning of what is known as his second missionary journey. He had successfully established churches in southern Galatia, and was planning to preach the Gospel elsewhere. For some reason, it did not seem wise, at that time, to go to Ephesus, the leading city of Asia Minor, so with his companions he came down to Troas, evidently with the idea of setting sail for some region further west but not knowing just what province would offer the greatest opportunities. Here he seems to have been seized with an attack of his chronic illness, and decided to send for a physician. His friends were directed to a man named Luke. Few events in Paul's life led to more important consequences than this seemingly trivial incident. Doctor Luke proved to be a gentleman of education and refinement. He was a Greek by race; in religion, however, he was possibly already a believer in the God of Israel. Very likely it was at the synagogue in Troas that Silas or Timothy heard about him. In every Gentile city there were many Greeks who attended the Jewish synagogue. At any rate we may suppose that Luke came to see Paul and prescribed for his ailment, while Paul no doubt told Luke about Jesus the great Physician, who could heal the souls as well as the bodies of men. Luke listened with eager ears. Never had he



heard a sweeter story. Nor did he hesitate long before accepting for himself the new Gospel, and declaring himself a believer in Jesus as his Master. Shortly afterward, Paul's health began to improve and once more the little party began to discuss the question, "Where shall we go?" One day while talking about the matter in the presence of their new friend Luke, the latter said to them, "Why don't you go over to Macedonia? I myself used to live there; in fact Philippi is my native city. I know many who would listen to your message. If you will take up your work in Macedonia, I will go with you as far as Philippi, and do what I can to help you." Paul was much impressed by this suggestion, and that night he dreamed that a certain man from Macedonia, or in other words, probably Luke himself, stood by his bed. "Come over into Macedonia and help us," the dream messenger said. When Paul awoke, he told his experience to his friends. "I dreamed last night that I saw you, Luke. You came and said to me, Come over into Macedonia and help us." The friends all agreed that this dream had been sent from God as a special call to them to begin their mission in that province. So, with Luke in their party, they sailed from Troas to Neapolis, on the coast of Macedonia, and thence walked ten miles inland to Philippi, where Paul began his great missionary campaign on the continent of Europe.

#### LUKE'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM. NEW FACTS ABOUT JESUS

This acquaintance between Paul and Luke, led to exceedingly important consequences for both of them; and through Luke, as well as through Paul, profoundly influenced the history of the world. When Paul left Philippi, Luke seems to have remained in that city. No doubt he took up the practice of his profession, and at the same time became a leader in the newly organized church. About seven years later, Paul came back to this city, for a short visit. He was raising a collection in all the Gentile churches for the poor in the church at Jerusalem. (See Chapter 4). He wanted the Philippians

to make a contribution, and also to appoint one of their number to go along with him to Jerusalem with other delegates from all the leading churches. The Philippians responded generously and named Luke as their representative. We can imagine Luke's joy. Not only would he be able to renew his friendship with his beloved teacher, Paul, but he would also see the land where Jesus had lived, and would be able to talk with many who had actually known Jesus in the flesh. Luke himself tells us much about this epoch-making journey in chapters 20-28 of the Book of Acts. From the moment when they landed in Palestine, Luke found himself thrown in with people who could tell him about the early days of the church, and about the life of Jesus. They stayed a few days in Cæsarea, and were entertained at the home of Philip the Evangelist, who had been one of the seven men appointed for special service, very early in the history of the church at Jerusalem. (Acts 6:1-6, 21:8.) In Jerusalem also, they were entertained at the home of a certain "early disciple," named Mnason. How eagerly Luke must have made use of these opportunities. "Did you really know Jesus when He was on earth? Tell me about Him." This was the request which must have been upon his lips. No doubt he went to all the places where Jesus had been; to the upper room in John Mark's home, where Jesus had eaten the last supper with His disciples; to the Mount of Olives, whence the Triumphal Procession had set out with their hosannas, and up which Judas had climbed with the priests and their band of hirelings. Surely he went out to Bethany also, to see Mary and Martha and their friends.

Through these conversations Luke found out much about the Master's life which was not generally known among the churches. In this we have another illustration of the fact that every disciple remembered and passed on to others that side of Jesus' life and character which he himself could best appreciate. As a physician Luke could appreciate especially well the tenderness and compassion of Jesus as shown in healing those who were sick

in body or soul. A doctor sees more than other men see, of the sadness and sorrow in the world. And the world in which Luke lived was even sadder and more sorrowful than ours today. There were no hospitals for the sick, no asylums for the insane. Nor did people in general seem to feel much pity for those who were unfortunate, or helpless, or stricken with pain. The rich and the happy, for the most part, went on with their gayeties quite indifferent to the anguish and the broken hearts on every side. As a physician Luke had tried to do his part to make the world less sad. But at best he could do comparatively little. Medical science in those days was in its infancy; they had only a few simple remedies. They were almost entirely ignorant of proper methods of sanitation. Great epidemics frequently swept over the land leaving death and desolation in every city and village and the doctors were absolutely helpless to check their advance. Luke's experience as a physician, therefore, made him particularly interested in Jesus as a successful healer of the sick, and the friend and helper of the unfortunate. This same medical experience also helped Luke to appreciate the friendliness of Jesus to people of all races. His power of sympathy had been increased, and it is through sympathy that we realize that black people and yellow people after all are human beings like ourselves; "subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same summer and winter." No doubt Luke asked the older disciples questions like these. "Was Jesus kind to foreigners? Did he teach his disciples to be kind to foreigners? Tell me more about his compassion for all who were in trouble?" It was perhaps in response to some such question as the above, that some disciple related to him the story which Jesus had told about a Samaritan who was kind to a poor traveller who had fallen among robbers. When Luke heard this story and others like it which at that time were not known among the churches outside of Judea, he must have felt himself to be the discoverer of a gold mine. Neither he nor

his fellow Gentiles had begun to realize what a wonderful Teacher and what a wonderful Personality Jesus had been. The half had never been told them. For the sake of his friends back in Philippi and elsewhere, very likely he wrote down on scraps of papyrus, all that he learned.

### THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

It was probably a good many years after this journey to Jerusalem that Luke finally wrote the Gospel which bears his name. He perhaps felt that there were others, who had themselves known Jesus, or who had been in close touch with the early disciples from the beginning, who were therefore better qualified than he to write a story of Jesus' life. In the course of time, as we have seen, books about Jesus were indeed prepared by competent writers, the best of them being the Gospel of Mark and Matthew's collection of sayings. Luke had a copy of each of these, and appreciated their great value. Yet he could not help feeling disappointed in them. Like the author of the Gospel of Matthew, whose work he had not seen, he felt the need of a more complete "Life of Jesus," in which the sayings of Jesus would be fitted into the framework of the events in His life, each saying being connected with the original occasion which called it forth. Even if He had known of Matthew's Gospel, he would still have been disappointed; for he would have searched through it in vain for just those deeds and words of Jesus which he himself most loved. In order to give to the churches this fuller information, he finally wrote his Gospel. He dedicated it to a friend and fellow-Christian named Theophilus. (Luke 1:1-4). The framework of his Gospel, like that of the second Matthew, was the narrative of Mark. Into this framework, the sayings are fitted, but not in the form of a few long sermons as in Matthew, but scattered here and there, in many different connections. In this arrangement he was perhaps guided not only by his own judgment, but by actual information, gained during that visit to Jerusalem, and later. Certainly the sayings are often

exceedingly appropriate in the connection which Luke gives. He himself tells Theophilus that he has "traced the course of all things accurately from the first." In accordance with this phrase, "from the first," he places at the beginning of his Gospel, an account of Jesus' birth and childhood. This is quite different from the account of Jesus' birth in the Gospel of Matthew, and seems to contain a number of reminiscences of certain facts; for example, Jesus' birth in a stable, His gradual growth in body and mind; and His visit at the temple in Jerusalem, when He was twelve years old. The supreme service of Luke's Gospel, however, is in giving us additional information regarding the deeds and sayings of Jesus during His active career as a teacher. Had it not been for Luke, the parables of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37), the Lost Piece of Silver (Luke 15: 8-10), the Lost Son (Luke 15: 11-32), the Poor Widow and the Unjust Judge (Luke 18: 1-8), the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18: 9-14), and many other sayings would have been wholly lost; likewise the story of the sinful woman weeping at Jesus' feet, the story of Zaccheus entertaining Jesus in Jericho, and the story of the penitent thief on the cross. All these are just such stories as we should expect from "Luke the beloved physician." They are all of them stories of the compassionate Jesus. In short, the Gospel which Luke has given us is, indeed, as Dr. Wells has said,

"Luke the Physician's Gospel! — comforting,  
Gracious and tender: laying gentle touch  
Upon the festering anguish of the world,  
Pouring in oil and wine; its ministries  
Halt at no bounds of nation or of race,  
But offer healing to a world diseased, —  
Kind Luke, the Gospel of the Heart of Christ!"

### THE BOOK OF ACTS

Theophilus must have been greatly pleased with this beautiful Gospel of his friend Luke. In fact every one was pleased with it. So cordial was the welcome which it everywhere received, that the author was encouraged



to write another book. There was a need for a history of the church from the time of the death of Jesus. In the first place such a book would help to correct misunderstanding regarding the Christians in the minds of unbelieving Greeks and Romans. All kinds of slanders had been circulated about them. It was charged that they were atheists, and that they were plotting against the Roman government. Many Christians had been put to death by Roman officials because of these misunderstandings. So Luke wrote the "Acts of the Apostles," telling the great story with his usual carefulness and skill. He took special pains to show that in the early history of the church, the Roman officials regarded it as an entirely innocent organization, and protected its leaders from the violence of ignorant and vicious mobs. In this book, as in the Gospel, we see the physician's point of view coming to the front. Luke is careful to show that the early disciples continued the deeds of healing which had been performed by Jesus. He tells how Peter and John healed the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple; how Philip healed the lame and the palsied and the demented in Samaria; how Paul healed the poor abused slave-girl in Philippi, the boy Eutychus who fell from the third story window in Troas, and the father of Publius, who lay sick of a fever in the island of Melita. In this book also as in the Gospel, we see the same sympathy with men of all nations and races. In fact the main theme of the book is the spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem to Samaria, and then "to the uttermost parts of the earth." What a delight it must have been to Luke, to record that noble address of Paul to the Athenians on Mars' Hill, in which the apostle declares that "God hath made of one, all nations of men!"

#### INFLUENCE OF THE WRITINGS OF LUKE

To what extent Luke's history of the church modified the opinions of intelligent Roman officials regarding Christianity, we do not know. But his two books have each exerted an enormous influence on the world, from



that day to this. They have helped to make Christianity a religion of sympathy and of healing. In many cities we have a St. Luke's hospital dedicated to the beloved physician who has told us more than anyone else about Jesus as the compassionate Healer. It is Luke's influence in considerable measure which has sent medical missionaries into "the uttermost parts of the earth," to minister to all nations of men. We are living today in the midst of a wonderful revival of the spirit of sympathy. Hosts of men and women are devoting their lives to help banish a little of the world's wretchedness, and make it a happier world for us all. These men and women received their inspiration chiefly from that portrait of Jesus which we owe to the great and tender-hearted Luke.

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. General Topic: How to make the world happier.

(a) Judging from the personal qualities which Luke exhibits in his writings, what kind of a doctor do you think he was?

(b) With what classes of people did Luke sympathize, as shown in his Gospel?

(c) Did he sympathize with sinners? If so, was this right, and why? (Look up Luke 15:1-32.)

(d) In the light of this story about Luke, what is the best way to make the world happier?

2. Light thrown on the Scripture by this chapter?

(a) Compare Matthew 6:9-15, with Luke 11:1-3. Which Gospel probably gives us the true connection in which the Lord's prayer was first spoken?

3. Of the parables which Luke alone gives, which two do you like the best? Suggested reading, Luke 14-15.

## TO SUM UP

1. Where and under what circumstances did Paul and Luke become acquainted?

2. How did Luke spend the next seven years?
3. How did Luke happen to visit Jerusalem?
4. Why was he glad to go?
5. What was probably one of his chief activities while he was in Palestine?
6. What two sides of Jesus' life and character could Luke appreciate especially well? Why?
7. What two written records did Luke make use of in preparing his Gospel?
8. In what respect is Luke's arrangement of the sayings of Jesus different from that in the Gospel of Matthew?
9. Mention some parables of Jesus which Luke alone records.
10. Mention some incidents in Jesus' life, which Luke alone records.
11. Where did he get this additional information?
12. Mention one special reason why Luke wrote the Book of Acts.
13. How does the Book of Acts reveal the point of view of a physician?
14. What is the main theme of the book?
15. How have the writings of Luke influenced the world?

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR NOTEBOOK WORK

Clip from your cheap Testaments (see notebook work for Chapter three), those parables of Jesus, related only by Luke. This will be easier if you have for reference a copy of the Harmony of the Gospels by Stevens and Burton. The complete list of references for these parables, is as follows: Two parables on Counting the Cost; Lk. 14: 28-33; two parables about Feasts, 14: 7-14; The Beseeching Friend, Lk. 11: 5-8; The Widow and the Unjust Judge, Lk. 18: 1-8; The Creditor and the Two Debtors, Lk. 7: 36-50; The Lost Piece of Silver, Lk. 15: 8-10; The Lost Son, Lk. 15: 11-32; The Unfruitful Figtree, Lk. 13: 6-9; The Unjust Steward, Lk. 16: 1-12; The Good Samaritan, Lk. 10: 29-37; The Pharisee and the Publican, Lk. 18: 9-14; The Rich Fool, Lk. 12: 16-21; The Rich Man and Lazarus, Lk. 16: 19-31.

## CHAPTER VIII

### MESSAGES OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

I Peter (64 A.D.), Hebrews (about 80 A.D.), and Revelation (about 95 A.D.)

#### CHRISTIANITY FORBIDDEN BY THE ROMAN GOVERNMENT

In the preceding chapter we saw that one of Luke's aims in writing the Book of Acts was to win the good will of intelligent Romans for the Christian religion. In the early years of Christian history the disciples had little to fear from the regular officials of the Roman government. There was indeed much persecution: Stephen was stoned; James was put to death by King Herod Agrippa, "to please the Jews." Paul says of his own career, "five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned." These early persecutions, however, were usually caused by hostile mobs, instigated by Jews, or by others who for special reasons hated the Christians. Paul was frequently protected from these attacks by Roman governors. He always stoutly insisted that these rulers were ordained of God for the punishment of evil doers. Under the wicked emperor Nero, however, the government itself turned against the Christians. This came about as follows. In the Spring of 64 A.D., the city of Rome was devastated by a terrible conflagration. A rumor was circulated that Nero himself, had started the fire. The rumor was probably false; nevertheless to placate the fury of the people, Nero found it necessary to find some one else on whom he could lay the blame. It was perhaps his beautiful but unscrupulous queen Poppaea who suggested the Christians. She was a Jewess and shared the special prejudices of her people against the Christians.

From Nero's standpoint, it was a happy thought. The Christians were already unpopular. To the average Roman, the name Christian meant much the same thing as the term "anarchist" does in these days. Hence when Nero said, "the Christians did it," the people accepted the suggestion, and clamored for vengeance. The Roman historian Tacitus gives an account of what followed. "First those who confessed were arrested; then on their information a great multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of incendiarism as of hatred of the human race. In their death they were made the subjects of sport, for they were covered with the hides of wild beasts and worried to death by dogs, or nailed to crosses or set fire to, and after dark were burned for evening lights. Nero had offered his own gardens for this exhibition, and also exhibited a game at the circus, sometimes mingling in the crowd in the dress of a charioteer, sometimes standing in his chariot. Consequently there arose a feeling of compassion towards the sufferers, although they were guilty; for they seemed to be cut off not for the public good, but rather as victims of the ferocity of one man." Tacitus says nothing about any persecution of the Christians outside the city of Rome itself; but the wave of persecution, which was set in motion in Rome, must have spread quickly to many provinces. From this time on, whenever in any community the feeling against them became bitter, their enemies had only to report their names to the Roman officials and they would be arrested and perhaps put to death. Of course in some places, they were unmolested for long periods of time. In rare cases, whole communities might be so largely Christianized that the church officials would be the leading men in the village. For the most part, however, the lot of the Christians grew more and more painful. The Emperor Domitian, who reigned from 81 A.D. to 96 A.D., was particularly hostile to the Christians. In his personal disposition, he was vain and jealous, and he insisted that sacrifices should be offered to his image in every province. This blasphemy shocked

and horrified the Christians more than anything that had previously happened.

#### PETER'S LETTER TO PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS IN ASIA MINOR

Two or three years before the persecution under Nero began, the Apostle Peter had come to Rome. Possibly he came at the request of Paul. Or he may have come as the representative of the church in Jerusalem, to assure the heroic old missionary of their sympathy with him in his imprisonment. It is quite certain, at any rate, that Peter and Paul were associated together for a short time in the city of Rome. Of the two men, Paul seems to have been put to death first, after which Peter gathered Paul's helpers about him, and became the leader of the Christians. There is an old tradition that when the terrible days of persecution began, the Christians begged Peter to flee to some safe retreat, and that he finally yielded to their arguments. Just outside the city, however, the Lord Jesus met him. Falling on his face, the old apostle cried out, "Quo vadis, Domine?" (Whither goest thou, Master) and the Master replied, "If thou desert my people, I am going to Rome to be crucified a second time." So Peter returned to the city. In this tradition there is at least this much of truth, that Peter did remain in Rome, with his fellow disciples, cheering and comforting them, amidst agony and death, until at last he himself, like his Master, was crucified.

These last months at Rome were surely the crown of Peter's life. How tenderly he must have comforted those whose loved ones were being tortured and slain because they would not deny Christ! At the secret gatherings of the Christians how he thrilled their hearts, as he charged them to be faithful, if need be, even unto death! Fortunately it is not necessary for us to rely entirely on our imaginations in this matter. We probably have a letter which Peter wrote to the Christians in Asia Minor, who were also suffering from persecution. In the New Testament it is entitled the First Epistle of Peter.



This letter teaches the Christians that the persecutions which they are suffering are opportunities for the development of character. Just as gold is refined in the fire, so through persecution they may become more like Christ. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you; but inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice. . . . For Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow in his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered threatened not, but committed himself unto him who judgeth righteously."

This letter was addressed to the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. It was probably delivered by Silvanus, Paul's old fellow-worker, who was now with Peter. He no doubt sailed from Rome, to some seaport on the coast of Pontus in the Black Sea. Thence he made a circuit of the above named provinces, carrying the letter with him everywhere and bringing new courage and hope to the tempted, the fearful and the heartbroken, in every Christian community.

### CHRISTIANITY WORTH SUFFERING FOR

There is another letter in the New Testament which, like I Peter, was intended to encourage Christians to endure persecution bravely. This is the Epistle to the Hebrews. Some ten or fifteen years have passed since the persecution under Nero. The Christians in Rome and elsewhere are not just now being called on to suffer martyrdom. But day by day, they are enduring all kinds of minor troubles on account of their religion. Old friends will not speak to them. They are publicly insulted in the street. Boys shout foul names at them in the market place. They cannot find work to do, and thus lose money, and come to poverty. In some ways these daily annoyances and trials were more dangerous to the cause of Christ than fierce and bloody outbreaks like that under Nero. Human heroism always shines out most

nobly in a short and sudden crisis. But many who would gladly have died for Christ gradually lost their zeal for Him, as year after year brought them only these disheartening experiences.

At that time there were still living in various cities of the Empire a number of Paul's old helpers. One of them, perhaps Barnabas, perhaps Apollos, or perhaps that noble woman Priscilla, who helped Paul in Corinth and Ephesus, wrote the letter which we call the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is more like a sermon than an ordinary epistle. The "Hebrews" to whom it is addressed were probably a group of Jewish Christians living in the city of Rome. The main idea of the letter is the glory of our religion. Christianity, we are told, is the goal to which all past history has been leading. "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets, . . . hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son." Chapter after chapter shows how everything in the Old Testament points forward to Christ and His Kingdom. We are the heirs of all past ages; surely in such a cause we can endure a little suffering. Only, to appreciate these glories, we need faith; that is, we need confidence in the reality of the "things which are not seen, but are eternal." It was through faith in these unseen glories that the heroes of old endured their trials of "mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment: were stoned, sawn asunder, slain with the sword." This section on faith, chapters eleven and twelve, is the climax of the whole letter. "By faith, Abraham went out, not knowing whither he went. . . . By faith, Moses forsook Egypt, . . . for he endured as seeing him who is invisible." Thus the writer leads us down through Hebrew history, to the final conclusion: "Let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the

cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

### THE BOOK OF REVELATION: ITS CHARACTERISTICS

The next period of especially severe persecution, occurred, as we have seen, some twenty or thirty years after Nero, during the reign of Domitian. At a gathering of the Christians in the city of Ephesus, during this period, one of the members drew from his girdle a new book, which a friend had sent to him from a neighboring city. At this particular meeting there were no strangers present, otherwise the book would never have been shown. The messenger who had brought it to Ephesus, had given this urgent injunction: Keep it safely hidden. Do not let any one have it except those whom you can trust. Above all, keep it out of the hands of the Romans. This book is known in the New Testament, as Revelation. It is a mysterious book. It belongs to a mysterious class of books, called "apocalypses." In the story of the Old Testament, we shall find another apocalypse; the Book of Daniel. There were many others, both Jewish and Christian, which were not finally included in the Bible. They were all written in times of oppression, and religious persecution, and express the indignation of the sufferers and the hopes in which they found comfort. They all predict the near approach of the Judgment Day, when the persecutors of God's people will be condemned to eternal punishment. They were all written in mysterious and symbolic language, partly no doubt, because it would have been unsafe to express in plain language the sentiments and expectations which they contained. This explains why that Christian in Ephesus was so careful to let no one see this new apocalypse, the Book of Revelation, except his trusted fellow disciples.

Where did this strange book come from? We cannot answer with certainty. The author gives his name as John: but whether or not he was the Apostle John, we do not know. We can only say that he lived somewhere in Asia Minor, during the reign of the Emperor Domitian.

## LETTERS FROM JESUS: ANGELS, BEASTS, AND TRUMPETS

The first three chapters of Revelation contain a series of seven letters, one to the Christians in each of seven cities in the province of Asia. Each letter represents what the writer believed the living Jesus would have said to each church. The main thought in all these letters is the same: The Lord Jesus knows what persecutions you are enduring. He knows your triumphs and your sins. He bids you to repent, and henceforth to be faithful, even unto death. "To him that overcometh," Jesus will give "the crown of life."

Chapters 4-20 are filled with mystical visions of angels, and trumpets, and beasts. The author describes himself as taken up to heaven, and there beholding "the things which must come to pass hereafter." Many of these symbols it is impossible for us now to interpret. The main point of this part of the book, however, is very clear. The end of the world is at hand. Christ is coming to overthrow the reign of Satan, and will mete out terrible punishments to Satan's representatives on earth, that is to the cruel Romans. After this will come the millennium, that is a period of a thousand years, during which Christ Himself will reign over all mankind.

The whole section breathes a spirit of burning indignation against Rome. The city of Rome is regarded as wholly given over to every conceivable villainy. The word Rome, to be sure, does not occur anywhere in the book. But the many allusions to "Babylon," are to be understood as referring to Rome. In the Old Testament, Babylon was a synonym for wickedness; and the early Christians frequently spoke of Rome as the Babylon of their own day. The following passages from Revelation illustrate the writer's hatred of Rome. "I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns." (The woman and the beast both represent Rome. The ten horns represent the ten emperors, from Julius Cæsar to Domitian.) "And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls,

having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations. And upon her forehead a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. . . . The seven heads are the seven mountains on which the woman sitteth." (17: 3-9.)

In one of these passages, which describe the wickedness of Rome, there seems to be a hidden reference to Nero himself, the first persecutor and the most cruel persecutor of all the emperors. "Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty and six." (Rev. 13:18). The ancient Greeks and Hebrews used the letters of their respective alphabets, to stand for numbers. Now if the words Nero Caesar, are written in Hebrew, and the letters are read as numerals, they make the sum of 666.

It is easy to see why such a book was written in this obscure and symbolic language; and why, even in its symbolic form, a Christian might well have dreaded being taken by the Roman authorities with a copy of it in his possession.

### A VISION OF HEAVEN

The last two chapters in the book (21-22), are in the form of a vision of the Christian's eternal home in Heaven. The writer tells of the beauty of this eternal city, the new Jerusalem; of its pearly gates; and golden streets; of the river of life; of the trees whose leaves are for the healing of the nations; and in the midst of it all, the throne of God. Of course, all these word-pictures are figures of speech. No one knows what kind of a place Heaven will be. But these figures stand for certain spiritual truths. We do believe that in that future world, we will know our friends, and that we will live in closer fellowship with God. These beliefs are expressed more beautifully in the poetical language of Revelation, than anywhere else. When those early Christians lay in prison awaiting the day of execution; when they thought



of the dear ones they must leave behind; when they thought of the shame and the torture which would be inflicted upon them amidst the cruel jeers of the multitude, then they would remember this book. All their copies no doubt lay hidden in secret hiding places, but they could repeat together such words as these: "And I heard a voice out the throne, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and be their God; and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more; the first things are passed away. He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." It was in part through the inspiration of these great and splendid promises that the Christians were enabled to go so bravely and smilingly to meet the sword, and the cross, and the flames.



QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

General Topic: Different ways of finding comfort in trouble.

1. Suppose we classify the various kinds of trouble in the world as below; to which class did the persecution of the Christians belong?

(a) Natural calamities, such as earthquakes.

(b) The consequences of our own wrong-doings.

(c) The consequences of the wrong-doing of others.

2. Mention some troubles in the world today, which come under the third heading.

3. Which do you think was the most comforting to the persecuted Christians, Peter's letter, the letter to the Hebrews, or the Book of Revelation?

4. Finish the following sentence, in the style of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews: By faith, the early Christians . . .

5. Was it right for the Christians to hate the Roman government?

6. What predictions in the Book of Revelation proved to be mistaken?

7. What is the chief value of Revelation for us today?

8. Mention a favorite verse, or passage, in the books discussed in this chapter. Suggested readings, I Peter 4, Hebrews 11, Revelation 1-3, 21-22.

### TO SUM UP

1. What was the first great persecution of the Christians by the Roman government?

2. Why was the Emperor Domitian especially hostile to the Christians?

3. What great Christian leader perished in Rome, during the persecution under Nero?

4. To whom did Peter write a letter from Rome?

5. What is its title in the New Testament?

6. What was the purpose of the letter?

7. What kind of persecution was being endured by the Christians to whom "Hebrews" was written?

8. What are the main ideas of this letter?

9. Where, when and by whom was the Book of Revelation written?

10. To what class of books does it belong?

11. Why is it written in symbolic language?

12. How did the author of Revelation feel towards Rome?

13. How was his attitude in this respect different from Peter's?

14. What events did John believe were soon to come to pass?

15. What spiritual truths are expressed in his poetical description of heaven?

## CHAPTER IX

### WHAT IS TRUE CHRISTIANITY?

#### THE GENERAL EPISTLES

Written about 80-100 A. D.

#### WHAT NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS ARE CALLED GENERAL EPISTLES?

The term General Epistles is usually applied to the following New Testament books: James, I and II Peter, I, II, and III John, and Jude. They are called "general epistles," because they were not addressed to any particular individual or church, but were intended for general circulation among the Christians. I Peter we have already discussed in Chapter 8. It is not strictly a general epistle, as it was intended especially for the Christians in one particular region, Asia Minor.

#### MISINTERPRETATIONS OF PAUL'S LETTERS

Most of these general epistles were written during the last ten or twenty years of the first century, A.D. Nearly all of the apostles had by this time passed away. At such a time the Christians naturally turned for guidance, to the writings which the apostles and earlier leaders had left behind them. Every church tried to secure a collection of Paul's letters, and if possible a copy of one or more of the Gospels. These writings were eagerly studied, and were sometimes misunderstood. New and strange ideas thus sprang up regarding the nature of the Christian life. It was especially easy to misinterpret the teachings of Paul; for his sentences are sometimes long and obscure, and hard to understand.

#### MISTAKEN IDEAS ABOUT FAITH

Paul had laid great stress upon faith as the essential characteristic of a disciple of Christ. "We walk by faith,"

"We are justified by faith, not by works of the law." (See Chapter 2.) He meant that no one can be saved from sin by a merely superficial reformation. The whole disposition must be changed; the heart must be turned toward Christ. If any person will thus keep his heart turned toward Christ, or in other words, have faith in the aims, the spirit, and the friendship of Jesus, he will as a natural result become Christ like.

Rightly understood, this idea of Paul is profoundly true, and one of the most inspiring truths in all the Bible. But at the time of which we are speaking, there were certain shallow minded persons who claimed to be saved by faith, but whose "works" were not at all of the sort that faith ought to produce. They gossiped about their neighbors; they were jealous of the honors paid to others. In the presence of important church officers, their language would be exceedingly pious, but with children or servants, or poor people, their angry passions were unrestrained. They also showed partiality in their church gatherings, toward rich people. If a man came in with a gold ring, and wearing fine clothing, they said to him, "Sit here in a good place." But they would say to a poor man, "Stand over there, or sit here under my foot stool."

#### PLAIN WORDS ABOUT CHRISTIAN CONDUCT THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

About this time, there lived in some community of Christians, a certain teacher named James, who saw clearly the hypocrisy of this kind of faith. James was a plain spoken, practical sort of a man, and gifted with a certain homely eloquence. He finally expressed his indignation, in the Epistle which bears his name. Through this letter or tract, James sought to give his fellow Christians some common sense advice regarding everyday life. He warns against sins of the tongue. He rebukes partiality to the rich, and shows his deep sympathy for the poor and oppressed. Above all, he scornfully denounces those Christians who boasted of

having faith, but who did not manifest this faith in actual deeds. "If a brother or a sister be in rags," says James, "and in lack of daily food, and one of you say to them, 'Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful for the body; what doth it profit? Even so, faith, if it have not works, is dead.'" Evidently, to James, the most essential thing in the Christian life was "works." Nothing less substantial would answer. "Pure religion, and undefiled, before our God and Father," he says, "is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

#### FALSE TEACHINGS ABOUT FREEDOM; OPPOSED BY JUDE AND II PETER

There were other so-called Christians at this time, who misinterpreted Paul's idea of freedom. Paul had written, "for freedom hath Christ set us free." That is, a Christian does right, not because he is compelled, but because he wants to do right. (Gal. 5:1.) But these men who claimed to be followers of Paul, taught that when a person has once become a Christian, he is free to follow any impulse which may enter his mind, without the slightest restraint. Their daily lives were even worse than the lives of the hypocrites whom James rebuked; and they actually quoted sayings of Paul, to justify their indulgence in all sorts of intemperate and licentious acts.

We have in the New Testament two letters or tracts, which were aimed at these false preachers of freedom. One is the little tract known as the Epistle of Jude. Who this Jude was, or where he lived, we do not know. But he had been deeply stirred and shocked by these wicked and dangerous teachings. "Woe unto them," he says, of these men, "for they went in the way of Cain. They are clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved forever."

The other tract against these men is known as II Peter. It is quite generally believed that this was not written by Peter, but by some Christian leader who lived many years after Peter's death. It was common in those days for writers to publish their compositions under the name of some great man of old. They probably did this, not with the intention of deceiving any one, but simply to honor the memory of those in whose name they wrote and to show what these great men of old probably would have said, had they been alive in later times.

The purpose of the author of II Peter was the same as that of Jude, namely to warn against these outrageous misinterpreters of Paul. In Paul's letters, he says, are "some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." "Wherefore, beloved," he says, "give diligence that ye may be found . . . without spot and blameless in the sight of God."

### LOVING OUR FELLOWMEN

There was another type of false teaching which was growing up at this period, very different from those described above. There were certain persons who not only abstained from intemperance and licentiousness, but who also insisted that all physical pleasures were sinful. They went about with long faces, and never joined in the social festivities of their fellow Christians. They frequently observed fasts, and never ate meat on any occasion. Moreover they insisted that no one could be a true Christian, or have any true knowledge of God, except by living as they lived. Because of this claim to a special knowledge of God, the name "Gnostic" was applied to them, which is derived from the Greek word meaning "know."

Now these Gnostics were usually good men at heart; indeed they often were unusually earnest and sincere. Nevertheless their mistaken notions regarding the real meaning of Christianity had a tendency to spoil their characters. They grew proud and censorious. They



criticized harshly all who did not fast as often as they did. They gradually won followers and produced many church quarrels and much bitterness.

These Gnostics were perhaps most numerous in the province of Asia, especially in the vicinity of Ephesus. Now there lived in Ephesus in the years between 80 and 100 A.D., the author of the New Testament writings known as the Gospel and the Epistles of John. It has generally been supposed that these were written by the Apostle John. In none of these writings, however, is the author's name stated. Whatever the name may have been, the man himself was one of the greatest leaders in the history of the Christian Church. Of the three Epistles of John, the second and third are merely short notes, on less important matters. But in the tract known as the First Epistle, he opposes the doctrines of the Gnostics, and seeks to remedy some of the mischief which they had caused. The main point of the tract, the point on which he insists again and again, is summed up as follows: "Every one that loveth . . . knoweth God." In other words, the true way to know God, is not by observing fasts, but by loving our fellowmen. The real source of moral evil, is not physical pleasure which, in moderation, is usually harmless and innocent, but rather, an unloving and selfish spirit. If these Gnostics, therefore, wish to show themselves specially holy, let them cease to stir up anger and hatred among their fellow Christians. Let them be kind and charitable. In short, the writer pleads with all his readers to cultivate the spirit of love, as the essence of the Christian life. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God. Whosoever loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love."

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Paul said, "A man is not justified by the works of the law" (that is, by good deeds), "but by faith in Jesus Christ. (Gal. 2: 16.)

(a) Did Paul mean that good deeds are not important? If not, what did he mean?

(b) How was this teaching of Paul misinterpreted in the time of James?

2. In what sense is it true that the Christian life is a life of freedom from law?

3. Compare James' definition of "Pure religion," (James 1: 27) with John's description of the true knowledge of God; (I. John 4: 7).

(a) In what way are they alike?

(b) What does John include, which James leaves out?

(c) Which is the best definition or summary of true Christianity?

4. What is one of your favorite passages in the General Epistles? Suggested readings: James 2; I John 3.

## TO SUM UP

1. What New Testament books should be included under the term "General Epistles?"
2. Why are they so designated?
3. What was the purpose of the Epistle of James?
4. What false idea is opposed in the Epistles of Jude and II Peter?
5. How did this false idea arise?
6. Who wrote II Peter?
7. Tell what you can about the Gnostics?
8. What evils resulted from their teachings?
9. What is the chief message of I John?

## CHAPTER X

### A SPIRITUAL GOSPEL

#### JOHN'S STORY OF THE LIFE OF JESUS

(Written about 100 A. D.)

#### THE GOSPEL OF JOHN: WHEN, WHERE, AND BY WHOM WRITTEN?

In the previous chapter, we saw that the Gospel and Epistles of John have generally been regarded as the work of the Apostle John. According to an early church tradition, this apostle spent the closing years of his long life, in the city of Ephesus. A large number of eminent scholars have confidence in the accuracy of this tradition and believe that John, the son of Zebedee was the author of these writings. Many other scholars, however, believe that they were not written by John. In any case the story of the experiences which led the author to write the Gospel would be much the same. In this chapter, for convenience sake, we shall refer to the author as John. Whoever he was, he lived in the city of Ephesus, about 100 A.D.

#### THE PASSING OF THE EYE-WITNESSES OF JESUS

Let us go back to the time when there remained very few who had actually seen the Lord Jesus, while He was on earth. Imagine that one of these men lived in your village. Perhaps he was not one of the Twelve Apostles. Possibly he was only a child when Jesus lived. Yet when we ask him "Did you really see Jesus?" he can answer, "Yes, I saw Him." Perhaps he can add, "I felt His hand upon my head, when my mother lifted me up for his blessing." How gladly we would have questioned this old man about that experience so long ago. He would have seemed to us like a link connecting us

with Jesus. But the time came at last when this man was seen no more. At this thought there settled down upon many a loyal Christian heart a sense of desolation. The stream of time seemed to be sweeping Jesus away from them. Seemingly, their only comfort now, was to look back to him and dream about Him as we do in our modern song:

“ I think when I read that sweet story of old,  
When Jesus was here among men,  
How he took little children like lambs to His fold  
I should like to have been with Him then.”

True they had been taught that Jesus had risen from the dead, and that he had promised to be with them “always even unto the end of the world.” But there were many to whom this teaching somehow did not mean very much. The real Jesus for their minds, was the Jesus who had walked with His disciples in bodily form, along the shores of Galilee.

There was another reason why these later disciples no longer felt that Jesus was near to them. We have seen that the earliest disciples had believed that Jesus would quickly return, to judge the wicked, and establish His heavenly kingdom. This hope was one of their sweetest joys. Anyone who has counted the days before the home coming of some dear one, can understand how the dreams of those Christian disciples were centered on one thing, the coming of Jesus. “Jesus is coming soon. Perhaps He will come tomorrow. Come, Lord Jesus.” This expectation helped them to feel that Jesus was near and real. But the years passed, and the decades, and Jesus did not return in visible form. Gradually the disciples ceased to look for him. There even arose scoffers who ridiculed the idea that Jesus would ever return. “Where is the promise of His coming?” they asked. Very few of the Christians expected Him to return in their own life time. Thus, just as the earthly Jesus seemed to them to be vanishing farther and farther in the distant past, so the returning Jesus was now disappearing

in a vague and indefinite future. They were in danger of losing Jesus altogether.

### A MAN WHO DISCOVERED THE LIVING JESUS

This sense of loss was being felt very keenly by many Christians about 100 A.D., when John lived in Ephesus. There was a time when he himself had felt it. To him, as to others, at such times, Jesus was only a wonderful historical character who lived long ago. Gradually, however, there came to him a strange experience. He somehow became aware of a Presence, walking with him day by day. He could not see or hear this Presence with his physical senses yet it was as real to him as the solid earth beneath his feet. In times of trial and temptation, he could turn to that Presence and receive comfort and strength. In moods of sadness the thought of that Presence would flash into his mind, like the sunshine breaking through the clouds, and all the world would again be bright. Every good impulse and true idea seemed to him now to be a whisper of that Presence. He had re-discovered the living Jesus. "Jesus is alive." At the thought his heart was filled with happiness. He could not but proclaim the news to his fellow Christians; "Jesus is alive." He was filled with a new enthusiasm for preaching the Gospel to those outside the church. He had a message for them which was worth proclaiming; "Jesus is alive." If people asked, "How do you know He is alive," he did not merely answer, "The apostles saw Him when He arose from the dead." He simply said, "I myself hold fellowship with Him day by day." The great fact of his life was this acquaintance, through personal experience, with the ever-living Christ.

### A GOSPEL OF THE LIVING CHRIST

In order to bring home to the men and women of his own time, this message of the living Christ, John wrote a new account of the life of Jesus. As a means of setting forth this truth, the Gospel of John is one of the most original and extraordinary books ever written. The



Christians of that day were probably not expecting a new record of Jesus' life. The first three Gospels contained all the most important facts. But the thought came to John; "I have known Jesus personally, all these years, just as truly as Peter knew Him of old. He has taught me many new and wonderful truths. Why not write a new story of his earthly life, and write it in such a way as to bring out these new truths which He has revealed to me?"

So John wrote his new Gospel. He does not give us many new facts regarding Jesus, beyond what we find in the older Gospels. But he re-tells these facts in a new form, bringing out more clearly what they really meant, in the light of his acquaintance with the living Jesus. He brings out this new meaning partly through allegorical narratives. An allegory is a story, in which every detail symbolizes some deeper spiritual truth, as in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." John finds these deeper allegorical meanings in the narratives of the miracles of Jesus. For example, in the story of the feeding of the multitudes, the loaves represent Jesus Himself, who is "the bread of God which cometh down out of heaven and giveth life unto the world."

Another method which John used for bringing out new meanings in the old, well-known facts, is that of conversations put into the mouth of Jesus Himself. John did not mean that Jesus actually uttered the very words of these conversations, but that they represent the spirit of His whole life, as the living Jesus had revealed it to him. For example, the language of the following sentence is probably that of John: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16.) But though Jesus Himself probably never uttered these exact words, they are nevertheless a perfect summary of the inner spirit of His life. There were a number of great and vital religious truths, which John sought to teach by means of these methods. We shall study some of them in the next chapter. Chief among them, however,

is the message of the living Christ. This message is indirectly implied, as we have seen, in the very fact that John ventured to express his convictions in the form of a Gospel narrative. From the first chapter to the last, we are constantly made to feel the influence of that Presence, which had become the great fact of John's life.

"BLESSED ARE THEY THAT HAVE NOT SEEN, AND YET  
HAVE BELIEVED"

This message about the living Christ is also set forth not merely indirectly, but explicitly, in a large number of passages. It is the meaning of the words in the story of Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well. "Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up into eternal life." That is, fellowship with Jesus satisfies our deepest needs; nor can this fellowship between Jesus and His disciples ever be broken. It is a well of water "springing up into eternal life." It continues through the centuries. The same message is expressed in the figure of bread, "I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst." Again in the farewell discourse to His disciples in the upper room (John 14-17), Jesus says, "I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me; because I live, ye shall live also." (John 14: 18, 19.)

The message is presented even more directly to the Christians of later generations in the story of doubting Thomas (John 20: 24-39). This disciple had said that he would not believe in the Resurrection of Jesus, unless he could "put his finger into the print of the nails," with which Jesus had been crucified. Afterward Jesus appeared to Thomas with the other disciples and Thomas said to Him, "my Lord and my God." Jesus answered, "Because thou has seen me, thou hast

believed; blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed." This is a direct and tender appeal to the men and women of John's own time. They found it hard to believe that the living Jesus was present with them, because they could not see Him or touch Him, as could the earlier disciples. "It is indeed harder to believe in Me now," says the living Jesus who speaks through the Gospel of John. "But if you will only overcome your unbelief, and will talk with Me in prayer just as though you could see Me and hear Me, with your physical eyes and ears, you will indeed come to know Me, and will know Me even better than those who only saw Me in the flesh."

Through this message of the living Christ, John also solved the difficulty of the promised return of Jesus. To those who asked "when will this promise be fulfilled, when will Jesus return to judge the wicked, and reward his disciples," John replied, "Jesus has returned. The judgment is taking place all the time. Whenever a man has the opportunity to believe in Jesus, but chooses darkness rather than light, he thereby judges himself. This is the judgment, that the light is come unto the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light." Nor will Jesus ever be any nearer to His disciples than He is today, if they will only recognize His presence. "Some of the disciples therefore said one to another, What is this that He saith to us. A little while and ye behold Me not; and again a little while and ye shall see Me? We know not what He saith." (John 16: 17-18). These disciples in this passage represent those Christians in John's own time who could not understand what Jesus had meant by His promise to return in a very short time to His people. And the answer of the living Jesus, as it had been revealed to John, is as follows: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. . . . Ye therefore now have sorrow; but your sorrow shall be turned into joy, and your joy no one taketh away from you." In other words, when Jesus was crucified, the disciples were sorrowful. But in

the joy of the Resurrection morning, Jesus returned to them never again to depart.

It is this message of the living Jesus which has given John's Gospel its wonderful influence in all subsequent ages. Its author understood perfectly the doubts and perplexities of those who must "walk by faith and not by sight," and he has helped the Christians of each new generation to discover Jesus for themselves, as their personal Saviour and Friend.

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Why was it right for John to declare that "Jesus said" thus and so, when the literal wording was really his own? For a concrete example, read John 3:16, which is clearly a sentence of John himself, although ascribed by him to Jesus.
2. How did John endeavor to convince other men, that he had really known the living Christ?"
3. Which would you yourself prefer: to see Jesus with your physical eyes, or to know him spiritually as John did?
4. What is the allegorical meaning of the story of the raising of Lazarus? (John 11:1-44).
5. Are there still new meanings in the old teachings of Jesus, which no one has yet understood?
6. If so, how will these new meanings be made known to mankind?
7. What parts of John's Gospel do you like best? Suggested readings: John 1, 3, 4.

## TO SUM UP

1. In what city and at about what date, was the Gospel of John written?

2. How did it happen that John ventured to write a new narrative of Jesus' life?

3. In what respect is the Gospel of John different from the first three Gospels?

4. Mention two ways in which John brought out new meanings in the old facts about Jesus.

5. Explain the allegorical meaning of the feeding of the five thousand?

6. In what sense is the following sentence a saying of Jesus? "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son."

7. What is the chief message of John's Gospel?

8. Mention two or three passages, in which this message is clearly stated.

9. How did John interpret the promises of the second coming of Jesus, which are recorded in the earlier Gospels, Mark, Matthew and Luke?



## CHAPTER XI

### JESUS THE DIVINE SAVIOUR

#### THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

(Written about 100 A. D.)

#### ARGUMENTS OF THE JEWS AGAINST THE CHRISTIANS

In order to gain some further information regarding the circumstances which led John to write his Gospel, let us visit in imagination the Jewish synagogue in the city of Ephesus, on a Sabbath morning in the year 100 A.D. The services are conducted in the Greek language and in the rear seats there are a number of Gentiles who have been drawn to the meeting by curiosity, or by a real interest in this religion of one unseen God. On another street, not far away, there is a house where the Christians in that part of the city are accustomed to meet. Many of these Greeks who are sitting here in this synagogue this morning, have likewise attended the meetings of the Christians. Some of the Jews also have secretly visited the Christians. This explains the character of the rabbi's sermon. After the reading of the Scriptures, he begins his exposition. The whole address is an attack on the Christians. "I hear that some of you have been attending the meetings of the Christians," he says. "Do not be deceived by their false teachings. They say that Jesus was both God and man, and they worship him as equal with God. That is blasphemy. What says the Law? 'Hear O Israel, Jehovah our God is one,' and, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.' Moreover, the facts show that Jesus was a mere man, and not at all what the Christians claim. At first he never pretended to be anything but a disciple of John the Baptist; indeed John was a much greater prophet than he. It was really John who originated the custom of baptism, and the

Christians have merely adopted it. As for the miracles which they say he performed, how do we know these stories are true? We all know how easily ignorant people are deluded; and all his disciples were uneducated laborers, fishermen and the like. None of the educated men of Jerusalem ever believed in him. In fact he never came to Jerusalem until the last week of his life. He spent his time in the obscure out-of-the-way province of Galilee. If he was indeed the Messiah, and equal with God, why did he not go to Jerusalem at the very outset, and present his claims before the Sanhedrin, and the other learned rabbis there? Another thing; if Jesus was God, how is it that he did not know that one of his own disciples was a traitor? Finally, if he was God, why could he not save himself from being put to death on the cross? You see how preposterous these Christian teachings are. Do not be deceived by them. The true religion, is the old religion of Israel. Christianity is merely an imitation and a counterfeit."

#### HOW THIS OPPOSITION HURT THE CHRISTIANS

Such anti-Christian attacks as these seem to have been very common in the Jewish synagogues of those days. Naturally, the Christians heard about them. They continually ran across these arguments, in talking with non-Christians. Many a time they would be nearly successful in winning some young Greek to belief in Jesus, when suddenly they would find his respectful interest changed to scorn. "You should have heard the rabbi yesterday," he would say to them. "He proves that your Christianity is either a delusion or a fraud." Thus they were constantly hindered in their missionary work. Moreover, many of the Christians themselves were bewildered by the arguments of the Jews. They were unable to answer all of them, and their minds were filled with doubts, and their hearts with sadness. For the main point of all these arguments was that Jesus was not divine; but to these early Christians, the one great motive of their religion, the motive which had given them new

power to conquer sin and live righteously, was love for Jesus as their divine Saviour. It was the thought of this divine man of Galilee which had touched their hearts to the very depths, and had lifted them out of degradation into lives of purity and love. Before they had heard of Jesus, many of them indeed had believed in God. But they had had only a very hazy idea as to the character of God, and they had felt towards Him, only a vague fear and awe. But this God in human form, who healed the sick, and pitied the sinful, and blessed the children, and died on the cross for the sins of others, . . . this God could win their deepest love, and transform their whole characters. Now if Jesus after all, were only a man like other men! At the thought the very sunlight seemed to fade out of the sky! Life was no longer worth living if this story of Jesus after all was only a sweet dream.

#### HOW JOHN ANSWERED THE ARGUMENTS OF THE JEWS

"These signs are written, *that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name.*" (John 20:30-31.) In these closing words, John states clearly one of the main purposes of his Gospel. He planned to answer the arguments of the Jews, and to tell the story of Jesus' life in such a way that no fair-minded reader could fail to believe in Him as divine, and believing, "have life in his name." Thus in answer to the argument that Jesus carried on his work almost entirely in Galilee, John tells of many visits to Jerusalem which are not mentioned in the earlier Gospels. In answer to the statement that Jesus was at first only a disciple of John the Baptist, this Gospel brings out very emphatically that John regarded Jesus as "one greater than I." "He must increase; I must decrease." In answer to the charge that no educated men had believed in Jesus, John tells about Nicodemus, "the ruler of the Jews," who came to Jesus by night; and John declares that there were many others among the rabbis who like Nicodemus were secret disciples of Jesus. They were afraid to let it be known, however, lest their associates

might persecute them. The main argument of the Jews, however, was that the Christians were ascribing to a human being, honors which rightly belonged only to the one true God, the Maker of Heaven and Earth. They were worshipping Jesus as equal with God, and this was blasphemy. In answer to this, John tells very fully just what Jesus taught regarding Himself. He shows that Jesus never claimed to be equal with God, except as a representative of a king is entitled to all the honors which are due to the king who sent him. Jesus was divine, in the sense that He was the one supreme Mediator between God and man. All his powers however were from God, who dwelt in Him, and spoke through Him. "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing." (5:19.) "I can of myself do nothing; as I hear, I judge." (5:30.) "My teaching is not mine but His that sent me." (7:16.) "I do nothing of myself, but as the Father taught me, I speak these things. And He that sent me is with me; He hath not left me alone; for I do always the things that are pleasing to Him." (8:28-29.)

In this sense of the word, indeed, all good men may be said to be divine. That is, God dwells in them, and speaks through them, and they are to some extent mediators between God and men. This is suggested in John's quotation from the eighty-second Psalm: "I said, Ye are Gods." (John 10:34-35.) The Psalmist was speaking of the judges and rulers of his day, and he meant that to the people they stood in the place of God, represented God. But Jesus represented God as no other human being ever had done, or ever can; for His life was absolutely sinless, inexpressibly perfect. Hence in Him we see a perfect picture of the character of God. God is just like Jesus Christ: a just judge, a tender Saviour, a loving Friend. As the perfect representative of God, Jesus is therefore the Light of the world. John believed that He "was in the beginning with God." The true way to honor God, then, is to believe in Jesus, and worship Him,

For, "he that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father that sent Him."

### PROOFS OF THE DIVINITY OF JESUS

Some might still object, how can you prove that Jesus was in truth the supreme Mediator between God and man. John brings forward in his Gospel a number of proofs. He appeals to John the Baptist. "There came a man sent from God whose name was John. He was not the light (of the world), but he came to bear witness of the light." The Gospel also appeals to the Old Testament prophecies of Christ. "If ye believed Moses, ye would believe me, for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings how shall ye believe my words."

But there is one final argument which to John is worth more than all the others, and that is the argument from his own experience, and the experience of his fellow Christians. "We know that Jesus is the divine Saviour," he says, in substance, "because through Him we have been saved." It is this testimony from personal experience which John puts in the mouth of Peter in his account of the crisis at Capernaum. "Upon this many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him. Jesus said therefore unto the twelve, Would ye also go away? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." Peter and his fellow disciples had been lifted into a new life of faith and love and self-forgetfulness through the inspiration of the words of Jesus. This same experience had come to the later disciples of John's time, through reading Jesus' words, or hearing them repeated. Jesus had done for them what no other man had done, or could do. They knew from experience that in Him were "the words of eternal life."

This argument is expressed with wonderful force and persuasiveness in the story of the blind man whose eyes were opened by Jesus. Allegorically, the blind man represents any Christian who has been cured of the blindness of sin through faith in Jesus. The Pharisees



use all their arguments and threats to lead him to say that he is a different person from the blind beggar of the day before. But still he persists, "I am he." Finally they say to him, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner." The cured man answered, "Whether he is a sinner, I know not; one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

"He stood before the Sanhedrin;  
The scowling Rabbis gazed at him;  
He recked not of their praise or blame;  
There was no fear, there was no shame.

"For one upon whose dazzled eyes  
The whole world poured its vast surprise,  
The open heaven was far too near  
His first day's light too sweet and clear  
To let him waste his new-gained ken  
On the hate-clouded face of men.

"But still they questioned, Who art thou,  
What hast thou been? What art thou now?  
Thou art not he who yesterday  
Sat here and begged beside the way:  
For he was blind: — And I am he;  
For I was blind but now I see.

"They were all doctors of renown  
The great men of a famous town  
With deep brows wrinkled, broad and wise;  
Beneath their wide phylacteries,  
The wisdom of the East was theirs;  
And honor crowned their silver hairs.

"The man they jeered and laughed to scorn,  
Was unlearned, poor, and humbly born,  
But he knew better far than they,  
What came to him that Sabbath Day.  
And what the Christ had done for him  
He knew and not the Sanhedrin." *John Hay.*



So the simple-hearted reader of John's Gospel, as he read this story, was comforted. He might not always be able to answer the arguments of the rabbis. He was not trained in learned arguments.

"But what the Christ had done for him,  
He knew, and not the Sanhedrin."

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Were there any elements of truth in the arguments of the Jews?

2. Which of John's arguments for the divinity of Jesus seems to you the strongest?

3. If a man is not a Christian, and is unwilling to obey Christ's teachings, will he be convinced by any of these arguments?

4. What persons did John chiefly hope to convince, through his Gospel; Jews, or heathen Greeks, or doubting Christians?

5. What arguments of the Jews does John answer in the following passages?

(a) John 1: 25-27.

(b) John 12: 42-43.

6. Mention other favorite passages or verses in John's Gospel. Suggested readings: John 6, 9, 14.

## TO SUM UP

1. Mention some of the arguments of the Jews against the Christians?

2. What harm was caused by these attacks of the Jews?
3. How did John answer these arguments?
4. According to John's Gospel, did Jesus claim to be equal with God?
5. If not, in what sense was He divine?
6. In what way was He different from all other good men?
7. To what proofs did John appeal, in order to convince his readers of the divinity of Jesus?

## CHAPTER XII

### THE STORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

#### THE WRITINGS OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS

The twenty-seven books of the New Testament were all written, for the most part, during a period of about fifty years, that is, between 50 and 100 A.D. They may be divided roughly into four groups, which represent in a general way, four steps in the history.

First of all, we have a group of letters by the Apostle Paul, written between 50 and 60 A.D., or thereabouts. Next there appeared the first three Gospels called the Synoptics, namely Mark, Matthew and Luke; and with them we may class the Book of Acts. They were probably written between the years 60 and 80 A.D. Next there came another group of letters, many of them "general epistles" or tracts. Most of them were written between the years 80 and 100 A.D., although I Peter was probably written much earlier (about 64 A.D.), and II Peter somewhat later (perhaps about 110 A.D.). With this group we may for convenience sake include the Book of Revelation, although only the first three chapters are in the form of letters. Most of these writings are the work of the successors of the apostles.

The latest book of importance, of those now in the New Testament, was the Gospel of John. There were other books by Christian leaders, written during this period, and later; but in beauty of language and greatness of thought, the writings of the New Testament tower far above them all.

#### DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE VARIOUS BOOKS

The New Testament books were written in many different places, as for example in Ephesus, Palestine,

and Rome. They were written by ten or twelve different persons. These writers were very different from each other in temperament and training. Paul was a learned Jewish rabbi. Luke, John and the author of Hebrews were also men of education, and wrote in polished Greek. The author of the Book of Revelation, on the other hand, made mistakes in grammar, and many of the other writers, as for example Matthew and Mark, had received little training in literary composition. In temperament, Paul was impetuous and quick-tempered. James was a man of practical common sense. John was a quiet dreamer. Most of these writers were by nationality Jews, but Luke was a Greek. Finally, the various New Testament books were called forth by the most diverse circumstances. Paul's letters were simply letters; it never occurred to him that any of them would be preserved after they had served their immediate purpose. Matthew wrote his Gospel for Jews; Mark was perhaps thinking especially of the Romans; Luke, of Greeks. John was seeking to help the Christians of the third generation after Jesus. All these differences of authorship and circumstances of origin, have left their mark upon the books.

#### THE UNITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Nevertheless, in spite of these differences, these books are bound together, in a very real unity. There runs through them all a remarkable love for a remarkable Person. The authors were all dominated by a passionate loyalty to Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth, and by the supreme desire to spread abroad among men, His ideas, and His way of living. It was the influence of Jesus which caused Paul to undertake those astonishing missionary campaigns, in the midst of which he wrote his letters. It was the intense desire to perpetuate the teachings and the personal influence of Jesus, which led to the writing of the Gospels. And of all these writings, none shows a more unbounded devotion to Jesus, or a more intimate appreciation of the divine greatness of His character, than the latest of them, the Gospel of John. Thus the story of

the New Testament brings us face to face with "the fact of Jesus Christ." Who was this Person, who suddenly, in the short space of fifty years, cut into the stream of human history with so resistless an influence? Who was this Galilean carpenter who inspired the New Testament?

• This is the one great message of the story of the religious movement out of which these writings grew. Ecce homo! Behold the Man!



## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. How would you use the facts which we have learned in the preceding chapters, to explain the meaning of any particular passage in the New Testament, as for example, Matt. 16:28, "There are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

2. Write below, the names and dates of the various New Testament writings, as nearly as possible in chronological order, beginning with I Thessalonians, as follows:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Book</i>	<i>Author</i>
1. About 51 A.D.	I Thessalonians	Paul
2. ....	.....	.....
3. ....	.....	.....
4. ....	.....	.....
5. ....	.....	.....
6. ....	.....	.....
7. ....	.....	.....
8. ....	.....	.....
9. ....	.....	.....
10. ....	.....	.....
11. ....	.....	.....
12. ....	.....	.....
13. ....	.....	.....
14. ....	.....	.....
15. ....	.....	.....

- |          |       |       |
|----------|-------|-------|
| 16. .... | ..... | ..... |
| 17. .... | ..... | ..... |
| 18. .... | ..... | ..... |
| 19. .... | ..... | ..... |
| 20. .... | ..... | ..... |
| 21. .... | ..... | ..... |
| 22. .... | ..... | ..... |
| 23. .... | ..... | ..... |
| 24. .... | ..... | ..... |
| 25. .... | ..... | ..... |
| 26. .... | ..... | ..... |
| 27. .... | ..... | ..... |

3. Suppose you were required to select one Synoptic Gospel, one letter of Paul, and two others out of the remaining New Testament books, and allow the rest to be lost, which four would you chose?

## CHAPTER XIII

### BARDS AND BALLAD-SINGERS

#### BEGINNING THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The only Bible which Jesus knew was the Old Testament, for none of the New Testament books were written until after His death. We know, however, from the facts recorded in the Gospels that Jesus eagerly studied in the synagogue, at the temple, and by Himself the Jewish sacred writings found in our Old Testament.

In former chapters we have seen that the earliest New Testament writings were not those which now come first in our Bible. This is also true of the books of the Old Testament. We have seen that behind the Gospels of Matthew and Luke lay two earlier books — the Gospel of Mark and another book now lost, Matthew's Collection of the Sayings of Jesus. In a similar way, back of the books of the Old Testament lay many earlier books now lost, but it is possible for scholars to detect quotations from them by studying the differences in language and style. We will therefore begin the Old Testament with the story of some of the earliest of these lost books.

#### THE EARLY HEBREW NOMADS

About fourteen hundred years before Christ, there was a group of shepherd tribes, leading their flocks from oasis to oasis, on the borders of the desert south and east of Canaan. Under the leadership of a noble sheik named Abraham, these nomads had come across the desert from the northeast. The people who inhabited Canaan called Abraham and his followers Hebrews, that is, "the people from the other side."

The nomads called themselves "the sons of Israel."

After a time certain tribes belonging to this group were driven by hunger to take refuge in Egypt. For a time they were permitted by a friendly king to pasture their flocks in the district of Goshen, the open range on the northeastern corner of the land. But a later king laid upon them the heavy hand of Egyptian power, and compelled them to render forced service on his great building enterprises. A leader was raised up for them, however, who had had the advantage of education in the Egyptian royal palace. His name, Moses, implied that he was an Egyptian, but in birth, in spirit and in heart, he was a true Hebrew. He appealed to his kinsmen in the name of the God Jehovah, who was believed to dwell in the sacred mountain Sinai, near which these tribes had probably often fed their flocks. They endured their troubles for many years but finally under the leadership of Moses, and trusting in Jehovah's help, they made a dash for freedom. Their trust was quickly and surprisingly vindicated; for a providential east wind swept dry for a few hours one night the shallows near the upper end of the Red Sea (lit. Sea of Reeds, probably Lake Timsah). Thus they were able to escape from the Egyptian soldiers who were pursuing them, and bade a long farewell to Egypt and its rulers. Returning to the semi-desert regions south and east of Canaan, they took up again, for a time, nomadic life.

This wonderful deliverance made a deep impression on the Hebrews. Immediately after leaving Egypt, Moses led them to Mount Sinai, where they offered sacrifices of thanksgiving to Jehovah. They also made a covenant, promising to worship no other gods except Jehovah. The memory of these experiences and the sense of belonging as a people to so just and mighty a God, undoubtedly lifted them above the tribes around them. They seemed to have more of what we call now "civic spirit," and a greater readiness to forget their selfish interests as individuals for the sake of the common welfare.

# SONGS AROUND THE CAMPFIRE

The earliest Old Testament literature was produced by these Hebrew nomads. They had no books in those days. They did not even know the art of writing, yet they had begun to develop an oral literature, consisting of songs and ballads, that is, stories in poetic form. As they sat around their campfires at night, one member of the circle would often sing songs, and repeat ballads. Sometimes they would have with them a professional bard. These men went from tribe to tribe, and from campfire to campfire, reciting their songs and stories, in return for food and lodging.

Scraps of these ancient poems are found in the Old Testament. One of them may be called the Song of the Well. The Hebrew maidens used to sing this song when they went to draw water. We may perhaps compare it with our modern song "The Old Oaken Bucket." In many languages, there are similar songs which express the gratitude of a thirsty man for a drink of clear, cold water. As desert dwellers the Hebrews deeply appreciated the value of water, so that this was without doubt a very popular song. The stanza quoted in the Old Testament is as follows:

Spring up, O well,  
Sing ye to it:  
To the well which the chieftains dug,  
Which the nobles of the people delved,  
With the leader's wand, with their staves. (Num. 21: 17-18.)

The majority of these ancient fragments are from war songs. Nomadic life was far from being peaceful. Pasturage was scarce, and every spring and well and green meadow was the scene of many a bloody conflict. There was no established government, and the only law was the law of blood revenge; "Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth." (Lev. 24: 20.) There is a fragment of poetry in Genesis, called the Song of Lamech, which celebrates the vengeance of some desert warrior.

Adah and Zillah, hearken to my voice,  
Wives of Lamech, give ear to my saying.  
A man I slay for wounding me,  
Yea, a youth for bruising me.  
If Cain shall be avenged seven fold,  
Lamech shall be seventy and seven. (Gen. 4: 23-24.)

Most of these war songs, however, reflect a nobler spirit than that of mere personal revenge. We can trace the influence of the experiences of the Hebrews in Egypt in a strong feeling of loyalty to the nation as a whole. This is the spirit of a song attributed to Moses, which praises Jehovah on behalf of the nation for the great deliverance at the Red Sea:

Sing ye to Jehovah, for he is greatly exalted.  
The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. (Ex. 15: 1.)

Another ancient fragment with a similar spirit is called the Song of the Ark. This Ark was a sacred box or chest which was supposed to represent in some special sense the actual presence of Jehovah. It was customary for the warriors to carry it with them into battle. When they had the Ark, they felt that Jehovah was fighting for them, by their side. And they sang a battle song, as they advanced with the Ark against the enemy:

Rise, O Jehovah, let thine enemies be scattered:  
Let those who hate thee, flee before thy face. (Num. 10: 35.)

### SONGS OF A NATION'S HEROES

Like all the desert dwellers on the borders of Canaan, the Hebrews looked with longing eyes on the fertile valleys. One unsuccessful attempt was made to invade the country from the south, while Moses, their great leader, was alive. Shortly afterwards they established themselves on the table lands east of the Jordan. After Moses' death, they crossed the Jordan, and gained a foothold in the settled territory. With that remarkable national spirit growing out of their memories of their nation's past, it is not surprising that they soon became



masters of the land. As for the earlier inhabitants, some were killed and others were reduced to serfdom. With others the Hebrews made friendly alliances, and learned from them how to till the soil and build houses. But upon all the other tribes who were gradually absorbed into the nation, the Hebrews stamped their own peculiar characteristics and religion. They continued to be the people of Jehovah, the God who had led them up out of the land of Egypt.

We have one very old Hebrew poem, the Song of Deborah, which comes to us from the period of the settlement in Canaan. With the exception of the brief fragments mentioned above, this is probably the oldest piece of writing in the Bible. It celebrates a great victory of the Hebrews over the earlier inhabitants of Canaan. Previous to that victory the original Canaanites were still in control of the cities and the fertile lowlands. In the northern part of the country there was a strong Canaanite king named Sisera, who at one time seemed on the point of reducing the Hebrews in that region to slavery. But a brave woman named Deborah went about among the different tribes, and stirred up the old Hebrew spirit. In substance, her message was as follows: "Let us forget that we are Ephraimites, or Reubenites or Zebulonites, or whatever our tribe may be, and remember only that we are Hebrews, the people of Jehovah, who brought us up out of the bondage of Egypt." The result was that most of the tribes united against the common foe, and won a great victory on the Plain of Esdraelon. After the battle, some poetic genius celebrated the victory in a triumph song which is one of the most perfect compositions of its kind in literature. (Judges 5.)

#### A NATION LEARNING TO WRITE

When the Hebrews entered Canaan, they learned the art of writing. Happily for the world, what they learned was the new alphabetical writing which had

been for the first time put into practical use by the Phoenicians. The cumbrous systems of picture-writing, which were used by the Egyptians and Babylonians, were not favorable to the growth of literature but were used chiefly for recording laws and business transactions. An alphabet, however, consists of only a few letters of different shapes, through which any spoken word can be reduced to writing.

Along with the newly discovered alphabet there soon came more convenient writing materials. Formerly "to write" had meant to engrave on wood or stone. That is the original meaning of the Hebrew and Greek words translated "write." Men, however, learned to write with pen and ink on rolls of leather. The ability to read and write became more common. Thus in time it came to pass that some Hebrew bard, or ballad-singer, wrote down his collection of songs, in order to aid his memory. Two of these rolls or books of early Hebrew songs were widely copied and became well known. One was called "The Book of Jashar" or the Book of Righteous Israel, and the other "The Wars of Jehovah." There are quotations from these two books in the Old Testament (Num. 21:14-15; Josh. 10:12-13; 2 Sam. 1:18.) Possibly they contained the Song of Deborah, and other early poems now quoted in the Old Testament books.

### RELIGION AND THE CIVIC SPIRIT

The religion of such poems as the Song of Deborah is essentially a civic religion. This was the unique characteristic of the Hebrews after their common sufferings in Egypt and their wonderful deliverance. They thought of Jehovah as the God of the whole nation, and as a God who would frown on any act of selfishness, whereby a single individual might be benefited at the expense of the general welfare. The essential spirit of this religion was on the side of justice and fair play.

Even in these early poems, therefore, we begin to see

the secret of that extraordinary moral and religious influence which the Hebrew people were destined to exert upon mankind during all the centuries to follow. In teaching men to deny themselves for the common good, they were to lift the world toward God.

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. What wars are referred to in the early book of poems entitled "The Wars of Jehovah"?
2. Why are they called Jehovah's Wars?
3. How does the Song of Deborah differ from the Song of Lamech, from the moral point of view? (Gen. 4:23-24, and Judges 5.)
4. Of what value is poetry as a means of cultivating patriotism?
5. Which of the songs mentioned in this chapter do you like best? Suggested readings: Judges 5.

## TO SUM UP

1. With what part of our Bible was Jesus familiar?
2. How did the deliverance from Egypt influence the character of the Hebrew people?
3. What was the earliest Hebrew literature?
4. Mention two fragments of the early Hebrew campfire songs quoted in the Old Testament.
5. How did the Song of Deborah come to be written?
6. From whom did the Hebrews learn the art of writing?
7. How was the Phœnician system of writing different from the earlier Egyptian and Babylonian systems?
8. Mention the names of two of the earliest Hebrew books.
9. What moral quality is manifested in the early Hebrew songs?

## A CHRONOLOGICAL CHART

In the latter part of this quarterly, there is a blank chart, which, when filled in, will bring clearly before the eye the most important events in Hebrew history, and the various writings of the Old Testament in their chronological order. In connection with this and each succeeding chapter, the events and writings referred to are to be inserted in their proper place in the chart.

## CHAPTER XIV

### OLD STORIES TOLD IN A NEW WAY THE EARLIEST HISTORIES OF THE HEBREWS

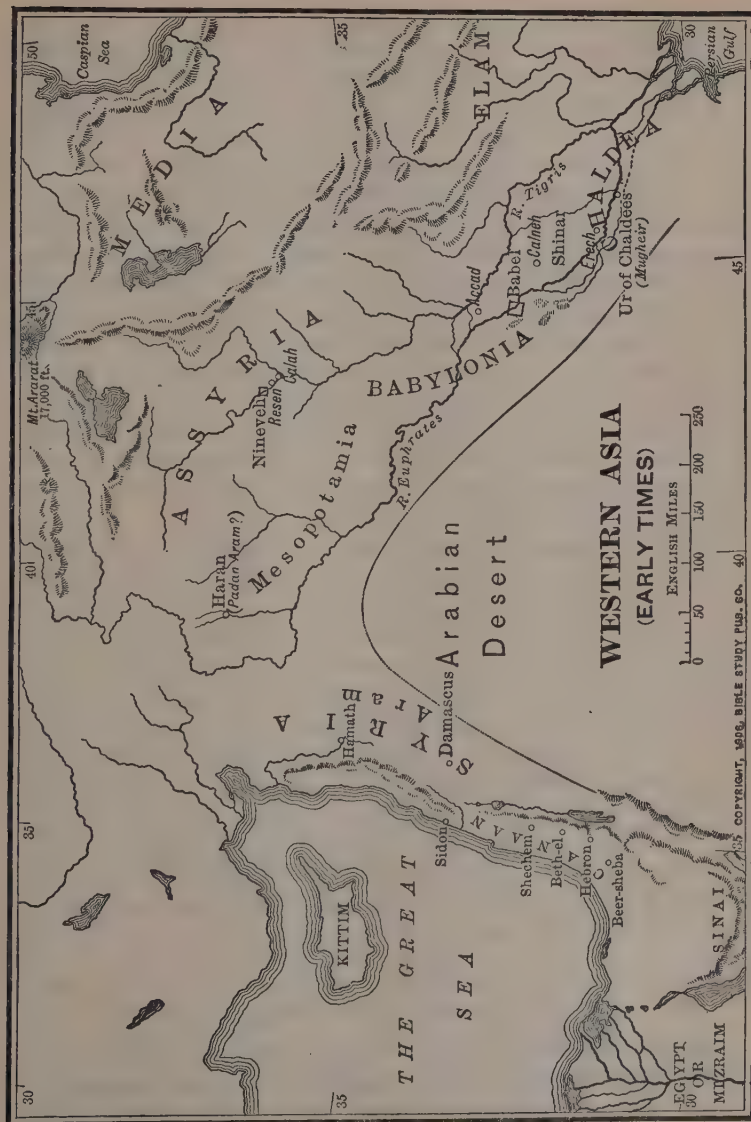
#### QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF THINGS

There are certain questions which awaken the curiosity of every one. How did this wonderful world come into existence? How is it that you and I happen to be here? How did things in general come to be as they are? Some of these difficult questions have been partially answered by scientists, such as Newton and Darwin. In ancient times there was little or no science; yet in every country, there were certain answers to these questions, handed down from generation to generation, and generally accepted as true. Among the Hindus, it used to be said that the world was hatched out of an enormous egg. It is not difficult to see how ideas of this kind grew up. First of all, some one suggested that the world might have been created in this way or another. His idea was accepted by others and passed on from lip to lip. Fathers told it to their children. After a few generations it acquired the authority of antiquity. "This is what we have been taught by our ancestors," people said. "It must be true."

#### THE NATIONS WHO TAUGHT THE HEBREWS

When the Hebrews entered Canaan they naturally were inclined to adopt the ideas and beliefs of the earlier inhabitants of the country, whose knowledge in regard to most matters was far beyond theirs. They also came in contact with other civilized nations, especially the Babylonians. The two leading civilized nations of that day were the Babylonians and the Egyptians.





A glance at the map (page 115) will show that any people living in Canaan would inevitably come into close relationship with both these nations; for there was only one convenient caravan route between them, and that route passed through Canaan. There was indeed a more direct route, but it led across the barren desert of interior Arabia, which was hundreds of miles wide. Hence the great caravans were accustomed to go up the Euphrates river some hundreds of miles, cross the desert where it was narrowest to Damascus, and then pass down through the narrow lane of arable land, about seventy-five miles wide, which lay between the desert and the southwestern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. That narrow stretch of land was Canaan. Visitors from Babylonia were therefore frequently seen in Hebrew towns and villages. Apparently they exerted a greater influence than the Egyptians, perhaps on account of their closer kinship in race and language.

For more than two thousand years before the Hebrews entered Canaan, the Babylonians had an elaborate system of writing. They used clay tablets as writing material. The characters were inscribed on the clay while it was soft, and then the tablet was allowed to dry and harden in the sun. The writing is described by modern scholars as cuneiform, that is, wedge-shaped. If you will try the experiment, you will find that the marks produced on clay by a sharp-pointed cube are naturally wedge-shaped. In recent years great numbers of these old clay tablets covered with writing have been dug up in the ruins of Babylonian cities and are now preserved in museums. Scholars, after years of patient labor, have at last deciphered this language.

#### THE QUESTIONS OF THE HEBREWS AND THE ANSWERS OF THE BABYLONIANS

As the Hebrews became acquainted with these rulers of the east they learned something of their answers to those eternal questions which men have been asking

since the beginning of time. We know that they were influenced in this way because on the clay tablets, some of which were inscribed long before the Hebrew nation existed, we find stories which are strikingly similar to certain stories in the Bible.

For example, Babylonian traders in the inns of Palestinian towns used to tell a story of the creation of the world and also about a great flood which the gods sent upon the earth. It was told as the answer to the question why we human beings die, instead of living on forever. Scholars have found clay tablets containing practically the whole Babylonian story of the flood. It runs as follows: The gods had determined to destroy mankind, in order to prevent men from attaining immortality, but one of them, named Ea, sent a warning to a man named Utnapishtim, warning him of the flood, and instructing him to build a ship, and to take into it his family, and a pair of each kind of animals. Then came the terrible storm of rain, says Utnapishtim. The earth was covered with water; for six days and nights the rain fell, until all living things were destroyed, except those on the ship. Even the gods were terrified, and climbing to the highest heaven, cowered like dogs as they looked over the edge. But after six days and six nights the storm ceased, and the ship rested on the top of the mountain Nisir. Then after seven days more,

"I sent forth a dove and let it loose  
The dove went forth, but came back,  
Because it found no resting-place, it returned.

Then I sent forth a raven and let it loose,  
The raven went forth and saw that the waters had decreased;  
It ate, it waded, it croaked, but did not return.

Then I sent forth everything in all directions and offered a sacrifice.

The gods inhaled the odor,  
The gods inhaled the sweet odor,  
The gods gathered like flies above the sacrifice."

## CANAANITE TRADITIONS

Besides these stories which came from Babylonia, there were many others which the Hebrews received from the Canaanites. Some of them had to do with the many shrines or temples, where the Canaanites offered sacrifices to the gods. These temples were usually built over certain rocks or near trees, which the Canaanites regarded as sacred. Each temple was dedicated to some special god, who was the Baal or lord of that part of the country. "Why do you regard that tree as sacred?" the Hebrews would ask. "Because Ashtarte (or some other deity) dwells in it," the Canaanites would answer. "She appeared here once, in visible form, to the man who first built this temple. That is why we offer sacrifices here." Thus the Hebrews were educated in the traditional beliefs of the leading nations among whom they lived.

## ONE GOD OR MANY GODS

Not all of this education was of a wholesome kind. The moral atmosphere among the idlers in the public square of such a town as old Canaanite Gibeon, in the year 1000 B.C., was far from elevating. All of these stories which the Hebrews heard in such places took for granted that it is right to worship many gods; but the Hebrews had promised to worship only Jehovah.

This worship of the one God of the whole nation was essentially ennobling. It was a civic religion, and tended toward righteousness. It led men to look at all questions from the broad standpoint of the whole nation. On the other hand, in each Canaanite village the Hebrews found a shrine dedicated to some petty local deity, the "Baal" or "lord" of that village and of the surrounding farms. The religious spirit at these shrines was narrow and selfish. The ceremonies were frequently impure, cruel and revolting. The best men among the Hebrews were therefore bitterly opposed to the worship of any gods except Jehovah.

## RETELLING THE OLD STORIES

One of the hardest problems these men had to face was how to counteract the influence of the stories about the gods, which the Hebrews had learned from the Babylonians and Canaanites. They might perhaps have denounced them; but that would only have increased the curiosity of people about them. Fortunately the wisest men in those early days followed a better plan. They retold these stories in their own way. Disregarding those things which were false and base, they were on the alert for illustrations of sublime truths. We have the results of their work in the great stories of the book of Genesis.

In all these stories, they struck out all reference to "the gods," and left only Jehovah as the one majestic creator and ruler of the world. In the story of the Garden of Eden, and of the Flood, they explained that troubles come upon men, not because of the "jealousy" of the gods, as the Babylonians had said, but because men disobey Jehovah. And what a contrast in the story of the Flood, between the Babylonian description of "the gods hovering like flies above the sacrifice" and the Hebrew portrayal of the one just and holy God!

These men also saw something worth while in the stories which originally came from the Canaanites. They therefore retold these stories also, in a nobler form. They explained the various sacred shrines in Canaan not as abodes of heathen gods, but as places where Jehovah at one time or another had appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The sacred stone at the temple of Bethel, for example, was sacred not because a heathen deity lived inside of it but because Jacob had used that stone as a rest for his head as he slept there one night, a fugitive. In his sleep he saw a ladder reaching to heaven and Jehovah at the top of it. So when he awoke he set up that stone as a sacred pillar, and poured oil on it. That is why (so this author taught) the Israelites

worship Jehovah by this pillar at Bethel, and pour sacrificial oil upon it. (See Gen. 28: 10-22.)

So well did the wise story-tellers do their work that these new stories almost completely supplanted the old, and in their new form were a most powerful help to the cause of righteousness and truth.



### QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. To what source of information would you turn for an answer to the question, "How was the world created?" Would you turn to the Bible? If not, why not?

2. What was the "Oak of Moreh," mentioned in Gen. 12:6-7, and why does the author take pains to tell us that Abraham built there an altar to Jehovah?

3. Why is story-telling a good way to help men to do right?

4. How would you explain the fact that to some of the Hebrews the old Babylonian and Canaanite stories were a degrading influence, while to the authors of the stories in Genesis they were illustrations of inspiring truths?

5. Mention your favorite story from the Book of Genesis. Suggested chapters: Gen. 1-4.

### TO SUM UP

1. Where did the Hebrews get their stories of the Creation and of the Flood?

2. Where do we now find the old Babylonian versions of these stories?

3. What resemblances do we find between the story of the Flood in the Bible and in the Babylonian records?

4. What differences do we find?

5. What evil influence did the Hebrews encounter when they entered Canaan?

6. What was the purpose of the story of Jacob's dream at Bethel?

## CHAPTER XV

### STORIES OF A NATION'S HEROES

#### THE EARLIEST HISTORICAL WRITINGS OF THE HEBREWS

After the deliverance from Egyptian oppression, the next event which most powerfully bound the Hebrew people together was the triumph over the Philistines. (About 1050 to 950 B.C.) This triumph is chiefly connected with the name of David, and also with the names of Samuel, Saul and Jonathan. The Philistines were a powerful nation on the west coast of Palestine. The Hebrews had just succeeded in establishing themselves in the central part of the country when they found their existence as a people endangered by the crushing attacks of these tyrants on the coast. But once again the wonderful civic spirit of the Hebrews saved them from destruction. Under the leadership of Samuel, Saul and Jonathan, the scattered tribes forgot their selfish jealousies, and were united into a kingdom. Under Saul and David, after a long and heroic struggle, the Philistines were subdued; and finally the tact and military genius of David made Israel a power among the nations. Through all the generations since that time, the Hebrews have looked back upon the reign of David as the golden age in their history; and their supreme national hope has been for a son of David to arise, who should re-establish a united and glorious Hebrew kingdom.

#### BIOGRAPHIES OF SAUL AND DAVID

In the years immediately following David's death, all hearts were filled with glowing pride in their national achievements. The universal happiness and enthusiasm welled up through the hearts and lips of poets into

songs, such as the one preserved in Gen. 49. It found another outlet in the writing of beautiful prose stories, telling of the great exploits of their national heroes.

In I Samuel, chapters 9-14, there is a series of quotations from a stirring narrative about Saul and Jonathan. In the remaining chapters of I Samuel, and in II Samuel, there is a group of stories about David. These two biographies were probably written during the reign of Solomon.

These books, the one about Saul, and the other about David, rank among the literary masterpieces of the world. Their authors were men of genius like the Greek poet Homer, who perhaps was living at about this same period. From beginning to end they rivet the attention and stir the deepest emotions of the heart. They also show the ennobling influence of that loyalty to the nation as a whole, which was so remarkable a characteristic of the Hebrews. For example, as compared with the stories told by the writers of other nations of that time, the moral standards of these early Hebrew writers were very high. This is illustrated in the history of David. In the stories of other nations, we find only the most extravagant praises of their heroes. The Hebrew narrative about David, on the contrary, does not cover up the fact that this great man had his faults and shortcomings. The Biblical writer tells the whole story of David's murder of Uriah, and declares that David's action "displeased Jehovah." The supreme object of this writer's love and loyalty was not any single individual, not even David, but Israel, and Israel's God.

#### THE DISRUPTION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

David's son Solomon was a man of a different type. He used his office as king to gratify his own selfish ambitions. After the death of Solomon, he was succeeded by his son Rehoboam, whose reputation for tyranny resulted in the revolt of the northern tribes, who formed a separate kingdom called Israel. Thus the nation was

broken into two parts, and the sense of national unity was greatly weakened. When there were two kingdoms, Israel in the north, with its capital at Samaria, and Judah in the south, with its capital at Jerusalem, the people began to lose their loyalty to the nation as a whole. Naturally, also, they became less loyal to the God of the whole nation, and the degrading worship of the petty local "Baals" began to increase. We even find Ahab and Jezebel, in the northern kingdom, introducing the worship of a foreign god, Baal Melkart, a Phœnician idol. (About 875 B.C.)

### THE PROPHETIC HISTORY OF JEHOVAH'S PEOPLE

This crisis brought to the front the fiery prophet Elijah, who fearlessly rebuked King Ahab and his queen for their worship of the heathen Baal, and for their injustice to their subjects. Other prophets rallied to the support of Elijah and his successor Elisha. Sometimes these prophets organized themselves into bands, and lived together as religious communities. They would build their own house, till their own fields, and eat together in one common dining-room. One day, in one of these communities, probably in Judah, a very wise suggestion was made. We may imagine that the prophets were talking together after dinner, about their work. "Why not teach our countrymen to be loyal to Jehovah the God of our nation, by writing for them our national history? We will show them what a glorious past lies behind us, and how wonderfully Jehovah has guided and helped us from the very beginning."

This suggestion was acted upon with enthusiasm, and the prophets began to gather material which they could use. Much of it was in the form of oral stories, handed down from memory, from father to son,—stories of the Creation and the Flood and other stories now found in the Book of Genesis. They also found written material, such as the songs in the Book of Jashar, and the Wars

of Jehovah, and the written biographies of Saul and David.

It appears that two such histories were prepared, one in Judah, and then another at a somewhat later date, in the northern part of the country, perhaps in the tribe of Ephraim. These were finally woven together into a single narrative, which is sometimes called the Judean-Ephraimite history. Quotations from this history make up the larger part of the present Old Testament books from Genesis to I Kings. The original history is not now in existence, but most scholars are in practical agreement as to the passages in our Old Testament books which were taken from it. Putting these selections together, we probably have a considerable part of the entire work in its original form.

#### HISTORICAL VALUE AND RELIGIOUS AIM OF THE PROPHETIC HISTORY

The ruling purpose of the entire history was not merely to give information regarding past events, but to teach religious truth. It is, however, a priceless mine of historical information. Naturally, those parts appear to be most accurate which tell of events which happened not long before the time when the history was written, as for example, the career of David, but even the stories which came down to the writers from antiquity probably contain memories of historical facts. We find that the story of Joseph is supported in part by statements on the Egyptian monuments, which refer to a foreigner who rose to power in Egypt about the time when Joseph is supposed to have lived. But the story of Joseph was included in the history, not merely to satisfy curiosity regarding that ancient period, but to hold up before the people of Israel those splendid ideals of purity and unselfishness and faithful devotion to the common good which Joseph represented.

One great idea runs through the whole work; the idea of the civic spirit in religion. Israel is the chosen people



of Jehovah; every Israelite must therefore be loyal to his nation and to his nation's God. The authors told how Jehovah had made three beginnings, as it were, in His effort to provide a race of men to love and worship Him. He began with Adam, but Adam proved a failure. He tried again with Noah, and even Noah's descendants became corrupt. So at last, he chose the faithful Abraham to be the ancestor of a better people. All kinds of difficulties arose, which seemed about to thwart the plan, as when Jacob and his sons were compelled to leave Canaan and go down to Egypt. But through such leaders as Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel and many others, Jehovah helped them to triumph over all their enemies. Thus at last came the glorious reign of David, when Jehovah's promise to Abraham began to be fulfilled. "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will surely bless thee, and make thy name great." (Gen. 12: 2.)

The influence of this history upon those Hebrews among whom it was first circulated must have been greater than we can realize. People were held spellbound by the stories of Adam and Eve, of Noah, of Abraham and of Jacob. They wept over Joseph; they were thrilled by the mighty deeds of Jehovah through Moses, and Joshua and Gideon, and by the great victories of Saul and David. Many of these old stories had been heard before, in one form or another, but men had never realized how much they meant. Now they saw that the whole course of past history was one splendid call to them to forget their selfish desires in loyalty to Israel and Israel's God.

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Why is history a valuable aid in helping people to be patriotic?

2. What do you think of the story of the tribe of Dan? (Judges 17-18.)

3. Judging from this story of Dan, what further development was needed to perfect the civic religion of these early historians?

4. What is your favorite story of those referred to in this chapter? Suggested reading: I Sam. 9-11.

## TO SUM UP

1. Who were the Philistines?
2. How did the scattered Hebrew tribes finally succeed against them?
3. Who were the chief leaders in this struggle?
4. What was the effect of David's victories on Hebrew patriotism?
5. In what writings did this patriotism first express itself?
6. What led to the disruption of the kingdom into two parts?
7. What evil results followed?
8. What did Elijah do?
9. By whom was the first connected history of Israel written?
10. What oral and written material was used in it?
11. In what Old Testament books do we find quotations from this history?
12. What was its chief purpose?

## NOTEBOOK WORK

Clip from worn-out copies of the Old Testament the original biography of Saul, as follows:

I Sam. 9: 1—10: 16; 11: 1-11, 15; 13-14.

## CHAPTER XVI

### JUSTICE THROUGH LAWS

#### OLD TESTAMENT LAW-BOOKS

In the first five books of the Old Testament, especially from Exodus to Deuteronomy, we find a large body of laws. As in the case of the historical narratives, some of these laws came into existence at an early date in Hebrew history, and others centuries later. The period of time during which the earlier laws were enacted and put into written form is about the same as that which saw the development of historical writing, from the earliest songs and prose stories, down to the composition of the connected prophetic histories. (1400 to 800 B.C.)

#### EARLY TEN-FINGER LAW-CODES AMONG THE HEBREWS

The Hebrews at Mount Sinai received from Moses, as Jehovah's representative, a decalogue or code of ten commandments, which in their covenant with Jehovah they promised to obey. Why were there just ten of these commandments, rather than nine or twelve? Probably for the simple reason that there are ten fingers on the two hands. These nomad shepherds had as yet no system of writing, and hence were compelled to rely on memory alone for keeping these laws in mind, and the ten fingers have been used as an aid to memory in all ages. As a Hebrew boy or girl repeated the ten injunctions, he would count them off on his fingers. If by chance he skipped one, the faithful fingers would reveal the mistake, for there would still be one finger left when he supposed he had finished the list. It was an easier task for him than for our Sunday-school boys and girls today, because in those days, all of the command-

ments were short, with none of the explanatory additions which we find in their present form. The original ten commandments were perhaps as follows:

1. THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.
2. THOU SHALT MAKE THEE NO MOLTEN GODS.
3. THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF JEHOVAH THY GOD IN VAIN.
4. REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY TO KEEP IT HOLY.
5. HONOR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER.
6. THOU SHALT NOT KILL.
7. THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.
8. THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.
9. THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS.
10. THOU SHALT NOT COVET.

This decalogue was engraved on stone tablets at a very early date and the tablets kept at some temple. For a long time after that, however, there were no other copies of it, save in the memories of the people.

This ten-finger, or decalogue arrangement was followed in all the earliest Hebrew laws. The original "Ten Commandments" are not the only decalogue in the Old Testament. It is possible to distinguish fourteen or fifteen separate decalogues in the oldest sections of Exodus and Leviticus. These were all prepared in that early period before the art of writing had become common among the Hebrews. In later times, of course, written copies were circulated everywhere.

#### THE INFLUENCE OF BABYLONIAN LAWS ON THE LAWS OF THE HEBREWS

At the beginning of their history, the Hebrews did not need many laws. Most laws are made necessary by disputes regarding property; and in their desert life, the Hebrews did not possess much property. Moses, himself, at one time used to settle all the questions which arose among them. (See Exodus 18.) Later, however, he appointed other judges to decide the less important of

the many cases which arose and only the more difficult questions were referred to him. After the Hebrews settled in Canaan and began to own land and houses and cattle as well as tents and sheep, other laws were necessary for their guidance in their new life. They seem to have adopted many of the laws which they found already in force among the Canaanites. The Canaanites in turn had been influenced by the laws of the Babylonians, which on the whole were surprisingly just. In the year 1901, a large block of stone was unearthed by excavators, on which were inscribed in long columns the laws of the Babylonian king, Hammurabi, who lived about 2000 B.C., or nearly a thousand years before Moses. We find certain resemblances between laws in the Old Testament, and laws of the Code of Hammurabi, just as we have found resemblances between the stories of the Creation and the Flood in the Old Testament, and similar stories on the Babylonian clay tablets.

In Hammurabi's code, we find the following law:

"If a man has hired an ox, and has caused its death, by carelessness or blows, he shall restore ox for ox to the owner of the ox."

In Ex. 22: 14, we find a law somewhat similar:

"If a man borrow an animal from his neighbor, and it be hurt or die while its owner is not with it, the man must make restitution."

In Hammurabi's code we find this law:

"If a man has deposited corn for safe keeping in another's house, and it has suffered damage in the granary, or if the owner of the house has opened the store and taken the corn, the owner of the house shall return him double."

While Ex. 22: 7 requires:

"If a man deliver to his neighbor money or personal property to keep, and it be stolen out of the man's house, if the thief be found, he shall make double restitution. If the thief be not found, then the master of the house





STONE COLUMN ON WHICH HAMMURABI'S LAW  
CODE IS INSCRIBED.

From a photograph by Underwood and Underwood.



shall come before God (that is, before the priest), to prove whether or not he hath his neighbor's goods."

These are certainly striking similarities and seem to show that the laws of the Babylonians were known to the Hebrews of those days. —

### THE MORAL STANDARDS OF THE HEBREW LAWS

All these early codes of the Hebrews, however, show the unique moral spirit which was developed among them, as a result of their experiences in Egypt and in the wilderness under their great leader Moses. They were rightly called the laws of Moses, even though not all of them came directly from his lips. We find in them high ideals of conduct, which were unknown among the other nations of that time. The moral uniqueness of the early Hebrew codes is especially clear when we compare them with the Code of Hammurabi. While that great ruler declared that his purpose was to "make justice shine in the land," we find, nevertheless, that many of his penalties are cruel. He makes distinctions between the nobles and the common people, and punished far more severely any injury to a noble. As for slaves, a master might maim or kill his own slave, with impunity. The Hebrew laws on the contrary do not recognize any distinction between nobles and common people, and more than that, extend their protection even to slaves. (See Ex. 21:26.) In short, the Hebrew laws, far more than the Babylonian, recognize that

"A man's a man for a' that,"

no matter whether he is rich or poor, a noble or a peasant, a free-man or a slave.

### LATER REVISIONS AND ADDITIONS

In later centuries, these early laws were revised from time to time and many additions were made. The Book of Deuteronomy is one of the most important of these revisions. It retains all the older provisions for

justice and kindness to the poor and oppressed, and adds similar ordinances in the same spirit. For example,

“When thou buildest a new house, thou shalt make a parapet for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thy house, in case any man should fall from it.” (Deut. 22: 8.)

As time went on there was also a great increase in the number of laws about religious ceremonies. There was a natural tendency to make the ritual in the temple at Jerusalem more and more elaborate. Written rules were carefully worked out by the priests prescribing how each minute detail should be performed.

But though many men, during many centuries, had a hand in the making of these laws, they were always called “the laws of Moses.” Later Hebrew generations believed that they were all given to the people by Moses, either at Sinai or on the plains east of the Jordan, just before his death. It was a natural thought, therefore, to combine the law-codes and the narratives of the early history of Israel into a single document. The laws would be more impressive in this historical setting. Editors and scribes, therefore, took that part of the Judean-Ephraimite history which covered the period from the Creation to the settlement in Canaan, and also certain historical narratives by later priestly writers, and inserted, at what they considered the proper places, the whole body of these laws. It is this combination of laws and historical narratives which we find in the Old Testament, as the Pentateuch, or the five books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The Pentateuch was known to the Jews as the Torah, or the Law.

In a true sense, this body of laws may very properly be called by the name of Moses, for to a large extent it carries out the aims and spirit of that great teacher of reverence toward God, and champion of justice among men.

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Do you consider that the most important moral duties are necessarily ten in number, as in the original Ten Commandments?
2. Write out below a list of the moral commands and prohibitions which you yourself consider most important.
3. Judging from his laws, what kind of a man was the old Babylonian King Hammurabi?
4. What do you think of the plan of the Hebrew editors to insert the laws in the midst of the early historical narratives, as we find them in the Pentateuch? Did it increase the moral impressiveness of both?
5. How important do you consider laws about burnt offerings as compared with laws demanding just dealings among men?
6. Mention some Hebrew law which seems notable for its justice. Suggested reading: Ex. 20-23.

## TO SUM UP

1. Why were the earliest Hebrew law-codes arranged in decalogues, or groups of ten?
2. Who was the earliest Hebrew law-giver?
3. Why did the people need additional laws, after the settlement in Canaan?

4. What is meant by the Code of Hammurabi?
5. How did this code influence Hebrew laws?
6. Mention certain resemblances between the Code of Hammurabi and one of the early Hebrew laws.
7. Mention some differences also.
8. How are we to explain the moral superiority of the early Hebrew laws?
9. What writings were combined by later editors to form our Old Testament books Genesis to Deuteronomy?



## CHAPTER XVII

### A CENTURY OF GREAT REFORMERS

#### AMOS AND HIS SUCCESSORS

We have traced the origin of the writings which were finally combined in the Torah and which we call the Pentateuch. The larger part of the historical narratives in these writings was by prophets, followers of Elijah and Elisha. We will now learn something of a whole series of books by the Hebrew prophets, which are found in other parts of the Old Testament. These writings were gathered together by the later Jews in a second collection called "The Prophets" which they revered very highly.

#### THE EARLIEST PROPHETS

The word prophet is applied to a number of important Biblical characters, such as Elijah and Isaiah. What was the original meaning of the terms, "prophets" and "prophecy," and how did it happen that these men called prophets played so prominent a part in Hebrew history?

In the earliest times, there was little difference between the Hebrew prophets and the same class of men in other nations of that day, for we must not make the mistake of supposing that there were no prophets in any nation except among the Hebrews. We can best understand what sort of men they were by thinking of the "whirling dervishes" in Mohammedan countries today. These dervishes work themselves into a state of extraordinary excitement through music and dancing, and often throw themselves into a kind of trance. In this condition, it is believed by the people that they are possessed by some spirit or deity. In I Kings 18: 26-28, we read how some of the earliest prophets leaped about the altar of

their god, uttering their cries, and gashing themselves with knives. These were prophets of Baal, rather than of Jehovah, but in II Kings 3:15, we find that Elisha also resorted to the influence of music to bring on a condition of excitement.

All of the early prophets in Israel and elsewhere earned their living as professional soothsayers. People came to them, just as men visited the oracles in Greece, for help in finding lost articles and for advice regarding love affairs, journeys, business adventures and military campaigns. No doubt Elijah and Elisha supported themselves in this manner.

As time went on there came to be a vital difference between certain prophets in Israel and the great mass of the prophets in Israel and in other nations. These new prophets, of whom Elijah was a forerunner, were not mere fortune-tellers, but preachers. The true meaning of the word prophet is "one who speaks for another"; that is, the true prophets were spokesmen for Jehovah. They told the people that Jehovah was not pleased with their manner of living. These men were to the nation what the voice of conscience is to each individual. If they were alive today we would call them reformers; for they tried to do for the Hebrews what true reformers today are trying to do; that is, to make the world a better place to live in and to hasten the triumph of love and justice for all. The great epoch during which these men lived and worked began about a hundred years after Elijah's time, or about 750 B.C.

The most important fact in the year 750 B.C., from the standpoint of Hebrew history, was the new world-empire Assyria, with its capital at Nineveh then rising to the zenith of its power. It had already conquered the old Babylonian kingdom and its emperors were looking westward with covetous eyes to the rich countries along the Mediterranean. Sooner or later, driven by the lust of conquest, their armies would be knocking at

the gates of Damascus, Tyre and perhaps Samaria and Jerusalem also.

### A NEW EPOCH IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY

Let us imagine ourselves visiting the city of Samaria sometime about the year 750 B.C. It is a beautiful city, crowning a low hill, and surrounded by fertile and lovely valleys. We find many fine houses and beautiful streets. Many of the nobles and wealthy merchants have both summer and winter houses. The country is prosperous. The reigning king, Jeroboam II, has been on the throne for nearly fifty years, and has been victorious over all the petty foes of the Israelites, such as the Ammonites and the Philistines. As a result, the upper classes have grown wealthy. Their homes are filled with all the luxuries of Babylon, such as inlaid ivory furniture, silken robes, rare and costly wines and perfumes. At the same time, we notice that Samaria has its poorer quarters, its slums. Here we find people living in wretched hovels. The children's faces are pale and gaunt with hunger. Clearly enough, a few unscrupulous nobles have been enriching themselves at the expense of the great mass of the people. They have cheated in business, and have oppressed the poor; they have bribed the judges who might otherwise have restrained them. Yet because they bring rich offerings as sacrifices to the shrines, they feel confident that Jehovah will protect them. But with such evils as these eating away the strength of the nation, what will happen when the Assyrians lay siege to the gates of Samaria?

### A NEW BOOK ON THE LIBRARY TABLE

Let us imagine ourselves guests at the home of one of King Jeroboam's nobles. Let us call him Azariah. As we are educated people, he shows us his collection of books, which are in the form of leather rolls. Here is the book of Jashar, with its war-ballads. Here is the History of Israel from Adam to David. And here is

a new book. At the beginning we find the following title: *The Words of Amos, Who was Among the Shepherds of Tekoa, Which he saw Concerning Israel in the Days of Jeroboam the Son of Joash, King of Israel.* "What is this book, my friend?" we ask. "Why, that is a collection of the speeches of a new prophet who made a sensation over at the royal temple at Bethel last year. You know the king each year attends the Passover feast at Bethel and all the fashionable folks go there to sacrifice. This old prophet came up from Judah. He had been a shepherd most of his life, and still wore the shepherd's costume. He came stalking in among the richly dressed people and made speeches there for several days. Finally he spoke against King Jeroboam; and of course the chief priest Amaziah drove him away. So he wrote out what he had to say, and a great many of us have copies. I was interested because I thought the man might be starting a revolution. He kept saying that 'the sword would devour in our cities.' Jeroboam hasn't treated me properly, and I would like nothing better than to see some prophet send him flying from his palace, as Elisha overthrew the dynasty of Ahab. I am disappointed in the book, however. It is full of crazy nonsense about the wrongs of the poor. He also seems to have objections to our sacrifices. I cannot imagine what can be lacking in them. I myself send a hundred fat rams to Bethel every year, and some of the other nobles send many more."

It is quite plain that Azariah has no very clear appreciation of the aims of this new prophet. So let us read the book for ourselves. Among the more prominent ideas we find one which is not new, namely, that Jehovah is displeased with injustice, especially injustice toward the lowly. We are thrilled, however, by the eloquence with which the idea is expressed, and we are astonished by the boldness with which the prophet threatens the wrongdoers, especially those of the wealthy and powerful

class, with destruction for their sins. (See Amos 2:6; 5:11-12.)

### A REVOLUTIONARY IDEA

This idea that Jehovah will avenge injustice toward the weak had already been proclaimed by the early story-tellers and law-givers and by Moses himself. There is another prominent idea in the book, however, which is absolutely new, original and revolutionary. This idea is as follows: Jehovah *does not require ceremonial sacrifices*, but only justice and righteousness. "Thus saith Jehovah," declares Amos, in sentences of surpassing force and grandeur.

"I hate, I despise your feasts,  
And I will not smell the savor of your festivals,  
And with your cereal-offerings I will not be pleased,  
And the peace-offerings of your fatlings I will not regard with favor.

Banish from me the noise of your songs,  
For to the melody of your lyres, I will not listen.  
But let justice roll on as a flood of waters,  
And righteousness, like an unfailing stream." (Amos 5:21-24.)

### THREE GREAT SUCCESSORS OF AMOS: HOSEA, ISAIAH, MICAH

This century in which Amos lived (800-700 B.C.) was one of the great epochs in the history of God's revelation of Himself to mankind. It is illumined and glorified by the names of four supremely great prophets, of whom Amos was the first. The other three were Hosea, Isaiah and Micah. Hosea, like Amos, delivered his message in northern Israel. He was a native of the North, whereas Amos came from Judah. Isaiah and Micah were also natives of Judah and spent their lives in the southern kingdom, in the latter part of the century. All four of them agreed with Amos that God requires, not sacrifices, but righteousness. Hosea expressed it in memorable words which were quoted by Jesus:



"It is love that I delight in (saith Jehovah), and not sacrifice, And knowledge of God, and not burnt-offerings." (See Hosea 6:6, and Matt. 12:7.)

Isaiah takes up the message as follows:

"What care I for the vast number of your sacrifices, saith Jehovah.

I am sated with burnt-offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts,

And in the blood of bullocks and lambs and he-goats I take no pleasure." (Isa. 1:11.)

Perhaps the most perfect expression of this teaching of these great religious pioneers is found in the sermons of the prophet Micah:

"It hath been shown thee, O man, what is good,

And what Jehovah ever demands of thee:

Only to do justice and love mercy,

And to walk humbly with thy God." (Micah 6:6-8.)

#### RIGHTEOUSNESS VS. RITUAL IN LATER CENTURIES

The prophets apparently made little immediate impression on the ideas and habits of their fellow-men. Religion still consisted largely in burnt-offerings at Bethel and Gilgal, and elsewhere. The later Jerusalem priests built up a more and more elaborate system of animal sacrifices. It is the common fate of great and original leaders that their followers modify their deepest and noblest ideas in conformity with the commonly accepted opinions of the time. They cherish the great master's words but ignore his plain meaning. Nevertheless the prophets did not speak in vain. The revised law-book, Deuteronomy, which was written in the next century after Amos, abolished all the temples outside of Jerusalem and stipulated that no sacrifices should be offered except in the temple at Jerusalem. The great Prophet of Nazareth set His stamp of approval on the good Samaritan who showed mercy on his wounded fellow-traveller, rather than on the priest and the Levite who offered burnt-offerings every day, but who "passed by on the other



side." In our own time, the writings of these prophets are being studied as perhaps never before in the history of the world. We are accepting for our own nation the ideal which Amos held up before the nation of Israel.

"Let justice roll on as a flood of waters,  
And righteousness as an unfailing stream." (Amos 5: 24.)

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Find out all you can about the early life of Amos, from the following passages in his book: (Amos 1: 1; 7: 14-15.)

(a) What was his native village?

(b) What was his occupation before he became a prophet?

2. What kind of a man was Amos personally: bold, timid, stern, tender, uncouth or polished?

3. Why did he choose Bethel, as the place to deliver his message?

4. Of the four prophets mentioned in this chapter, which one set forth most perfectly the truth that God does not require sacrifices, but only right conduct?

5. Does this truth have any close application to men and women today? What is sometimes offered to God today, instead of right conduct in everyday life?

6. What are some things which Amos would criticize in our nation today?

7. Of the passages from Amos, which are quoted in this chapter, or which you may have read in the Bible itself, which do you most admire? Suggested readings: Amos 1-2, 5, 7-8.

TO SUM UP

1. What class of persons in certain modern countries are similar to the earliest Hebrew prophets?
2. Into what physical and mental condition was it considered necessary for them to bring themselves, in order that the deity might speak through them?
3. How did they earn their living?
4. How did certain of the Hebrew prophets lift themselves far above the prophets and soothsayers of other nations?
5. What persons in our country are like the later great Hebrew prophets?
6. What were the beliefs of all the Hebrews regarding sacrifices, prior to about 750 B.C.?
7. What were some of the evils in the Hebrew nation about this time?
8. What great danger threatened the nation from outside?
9. Mention the most important points in the message of Amos to his countrymen.
10. What part of his message was wholly new and original?
11. What other prophets took up the same message during this same century?

## CHAPTER XVIII

### A FORGIVING HUSBAND WHO TOLD OF GOD'S MERCY

#### THE BOOK OF HOSEA

#### A VILLAGE LOVE-STORY

While the young man Amos was keeping sheep in Tekoa, a lad named Hosea was growing up in a village in Northern Israel, probably across the river Jordan in the land of Gilead. 'He was affectionate, sweet-spirited, strong in mind and body. Not far away, perhaps in a neighboring village, there lived a maiden named Gomer. She also was lovable in many ways. One day she met Hosea, and they loved each other. We can imagine the happiness of their courtship. Near the probable site of Hosea's village, there is a hill whose bold bluffs overlook the broad valley of the Jordan. We can imagine Hosea and Gomer walking together in the beautiful days of spring or summer, along the brow of this hill, and looking off across those broad, fertile fields and vineclad slopes of Northern Israel, and promising to be true to each other so long as life should last.

#### AN UNHAPPY MARRIAGE

After the wedding day Gomer began to reveal an unsuspected weakness of character. She had always been allowed to have her own sweet will in everything, and had never learned the lesson of self-control. So now she showed herself unfit for the serious responsibilities of married life. When children were born, she no doubt neglected them. No doubt she wasted her husband's money, and bitterly reproached him because he could not buy jewels for her, and fashionable garments such as

some of her former girl friends possessed. She had no sympathy for Hosea's deeper purposes and ideals. Hosea felt in his heart that he had a mission in life. He had become a prophet, and like Amos was urging his countrymen to forsake their evil ways and obey the righteous commands of Jehovah. Gomer, however, cared for none of these things. Her thoughts were all on the pleasures of the passing moment. By and by the evil shadow of a tempter fell across her path. Luxuries were promised her, if she would forsake this tiresome preacher and his simple home. So it came to pass that they were separated.

### A LOVE WHICH COULD NOT BE CONQUERED

Thus Hosea's home was wrecked, and his heart was heavy. He had tried so faithfully to be kind to Gomer, and how faithless she had proved! Many times he wished with all his heart that he had never seen her. Years passed, and he saw nothing of her. Then one day, perhaps as he was passing through another village on a preaching tour, he found her. Poor woman! her life had not been as she had planned. She had sought for pleasure and had found pain. She was now a slave. No doubt she tried to avoid Hosea when she saw him approaching, but his quick eyes were too swift for her. To his surprise, he felt in his heart a great wave of the old love. She was still his Gomer, the maid whom he had loved in Gilead. "Come, Gomer," he said, as she stood before him with downcast eyes. "Let us go home." "I cannot," she answered, "I am a slave." Inquiring for her master, Hosea arranged to buy her for about the usual price of a slave, "fifteen pieces of silver, and eight bushels of barley and a measure of barley." Then he took her back with him, and she came once again through their little cottage door. Did she stay? Was she faithful to him, now? Had she learned her lesson? We can only say that after being so generously and nobly forgiven, surely she must have proved faithful; we

have, however, no definite information to confirm us in this conclusion.

#### HOSEA'S DISCOVERY: THE FORGIVING LOVE OF GOD

Whether or not Gomer learned her lesson, there was also a lesson for Hosea in all this, and he was great enough to see it. As a result of the impulse to forgive this woman who had been false to him, the thought flashed into his mind that Jehovah would be no less ready to forgive His people, in spite of the fact that they had worshipped other gods, and had disobeyed His laws. A change now showed itself in the tone of Hosea's addresses to the people. He continued to denounce unsparingly the sins of his countrymen, yet he grew more tender toward them. (See Hosea, 4: 1-2.)

Again and again Hosea declared that Jehovah would surely punish the nation for these dreadful wrongs. Like Amos, he foresaw that the armies of the great empire Assyria were likely to invade Palestine, bringing with them all the horrible atrocities of ancient warfare. This, he believed, would be Jehovah's way of punishing guilty Israel. (See Hosea 13: 16.)

This punishment, however, according to Hosea, would not mean that Jehovah had ceased to love His people. On the contrary he taught that Jehovah sends punishment with a breaking heart.

"How can I give thee up, O Ephraim!" (saith Jehovah.)

"How can I give thee over, O Israel!" (Hosea 11: 8.)

Hosea also declared that through punishment Jehovah was seeking to cure His people of their sin. Led away as exiles by the King of Assyria, their hearts might perhaps be won back at last to their God. In short, Hosea's sad experience with Gomer made him the great prophet who first proclaimed God's infinite love even for sinners, and His readiness to forgive the penitent.



## THE GREAT NEED OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL: TRUE WORSHIP

There was another lesson which grew out of Hosea's own bitter personal experience. Since God loved Israel with so marvelous a love, then failure to love Him and worship Him in return is the greatest of all sins. In this matter Hosea supplemented the teachings of his great contemporary, Amos. The attention of the latter prophet had been chiefly fixed on the wrongs of men against other men. His heart had burned with indignation and pity, in view of the glaring acts of injustice which were constantly practiced by the rich and powerful at the expense of the poor and lowly. Hosea also preached against the lies, the thefts and the murders of his countrymen, but he saw more clearly than Amos that the root-sin from which all these others sprang was that they had turned their hearts away from God. They were lacking in true worship. "There is none among them who calls to me" (saith Jehovah). (Hosea 7:7.)

"They do not return to Jehovah their God." (Hosea 7:10.)

"They have never cried to me with their heart." (Hosea 7:14.)

There was an abundance of so-called worship, but it was carried on merely for the sake of the material blessings which they thought would follow. It was like the "cup-board love" of kittens purring for cream.

"They have never cried to me with their heart;

But they are ever howling beside their altars for corn and new wine." (Hosea 7:14.)

When they thought they could secure these material blessings by idolatrous worship, then they worshipped other gods. (Hosea 2:5.)

Even as Gomer had cared only for pleasures, and had abandoned Hosea because he could not lavish money upon her, so the people of Israel thought only of material enjoyments. Just as Gomer had failed to appreciate the higher blessing of a life-long comradeship with a

noble soul like Hosea, so the Israelites cared nothing for the one supreme blessing of life, loving companionship with God. Hosea saw that the deepest and most urgent need of the people was a renewal of true spiritual worship; not outward forms and ceremonies, but a genuine "crying unto Jehovah," a genuine seeking after God in prayer. From this would follow, as a natural result, right conduct between man and man. In his dreams of a better future, when Israel should have been chastened through suffering, the sweetest thought to Hosea is that Israel and her God would then be reconciled.

### THE INFLUENCE OF HOSEA

In order to gain a wider hearing for his message, Hosea wrote down in a book a series of extracts from his oral addresses. Many copies of this book doubtless found their way to the library tables of the time, along with the "Words of Amos." If the prophetic books of the Old Testament were arranged in chronological order, Amos and Hosea would stand side by side at the head of the list. Of the two, Amos was probably written several years earlier.

Hosea no doubt hoped, as did Amos, that his book would help to bring his countrymen to their senses in time to ward off the approaching disaster. He certainly succeeded in making a deep impression upon a few individuals. But the nation as a whole went rapidly from bad to worse. The powerful Jeroboam II died in 740 B.C. A period of anarchy immediately set in; many of Hosea's addresses were written during this period of anarchy; assassinations followed each other in quick succession, and the nation fell an easy prey to the Assyrian conquerors. In 725 B.C. the Assyrian emperor Shalmaneser laid siege to the city of Samaria, and after three years in 722 B.C. it was captured by Sargon, his successor. The sword did indeed "whirl in Samaria," as Hosea had foretold. Over twenty thousand of its

inhabitants were led away as captives, never to return. In the words of Amos,

“The virgin Israel had fallen, no more to rise.”

Had it not been for the little kingdom of Judah, which still remained intact, the religion of Jehovah might at this time have perished from the earth. Fortunately, however, a few refugees, believers in the message of Amos and Hosea, brought with them into Judah as their most cherished possessions, whatever writings by the prophets they may have had, including “the Words of Amos,” and “the Words of Hosea.” These writings played a great part in the future history of Judah. Other prophets, such as Isaiah and Micah, were inspired by them, took up their message, and carried on in Judah the work which had been begun in Northern Israel. The book of Hosea was especially influential. Jesus himself quoted from it, and the glad tidings of the Father’s love for His sinful children, which was the heart of Jesus’ message, was but the crown and completion of Hosea’s great discovery of Jehovah’s love for sinful Israel.

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Compare the two prophets Amos and Hosea. In what ways were they alike, and in what, unlike?

2. Do you approve of Hosea's action in taking Gomer back into his home? Did he not thereby encourage other women to be false to their husbands?

3. In the light of Hosea's teaching, do you believe in praying for material and physical benefits, such as for rain, in time of dry weather, or for recovery from sickness?

4. What should be our chief object, in prayer?

5. Which prophet do you like the better, Amos or Hosea?

6. Mention one or two of Hosea's greatest utterances. Suggested readings Hosea: 1; 3; 2 (in this order); and 11.

## TO SUM UP

1. When did Hosea live?
2. In what part of Palestine was he born?
3. Mention two important truths which he sought to teach to his countrymen.

4. Through what experience did he himself come to understand these truths?

5. What does Hosea mean by saying, "Jehovah said to Hosea, go marry a wife with instincts toward unfaithfulness," etc.?

6. Through what disaster were the predictions of Amos and Hosea quickly verified?

7. What was the date of the capture of Samaria by Sargon?

8. How was Hosea's influence perpetuated?

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## CHAPTER XIX

### THE COUNSELS OF A STATESMAN-PROPHET

#### THE WRITINGS OF ISAIAH

Amos and Hosea spoke their messages of warning in the northern kingdom, while that nation was hastening toward its tragic fall. Meanwhile, similar dangers were threatening her sister kingdom, Judah, in the south. The same Assyrian armies that besieged and captured Samaria in 722 B.C. might easily have gone on and captured Jerusalem. The native strength of Judah, as of Northern Israel, was being eaten away by vice and injustice. In the early part of the century (from 782 to about 737 B.C.), Judah was fortunate in having an able and upright king, whose name was Uzziah. We read in II Kings 15:3, that he "did that which was right in the sight of Jehovah." No doubt he restrained to some extent the evil tendencies of his corrupt nobles. The years passed, however, and Uzziah grew old and feeble, while Assyria became more and more aggressive. What would become of the nation after Uzziah's death? Would the crown prince Jotham prove to be a wise king like his father? No one knew.

During these closing years of Uzziah's reign, a young lad named Isaiah was growing to manhood in Jerusalem. He was probably a member of a prominent family, perhaps even related to the king. He may have listened to addresses by Amos and Hosea, while visiting in the North. At any rate, he had copies of their writings, and was deeply influenced by them. For a long time he brooded over the dangers which were threatening his beloved Judah. Then came the year of King Uzziah's death. One day, during that year of anxiety and sus-



pense, Isaiah went to the temple to worship. As he stood praying, there came to him the great experience of his life. (Isa. 6.)

In the dim light of the temple interior, he seemed to see Jehovah himself sitting on a lofty throne. At first the vision brought to him only a deep sense of his own sin and unworthiness. He cried out, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." Soon, however, the vision seemed to purge away his sins, as fire purges away whatever is foul and unclean. With this new sense of God's forgiveness came an impulse to go and tell his countrymen of the Holy One of Israel, whom he himself had seen with the eyes of his soul. He felt like shouting from the housetop, "Jehovah can save us if we will but turn to Him and trust in Him." In all this he was hearing the voice of Jehovah in his heart, saying "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And he answered, "Here am I; send me." Thus Isaiah became a prophet, and came to the help of his people in their hour of need.

#### ISAIAH'S MESSAGE AS A PREACHER

In many ways Isaiah's work was a continuation of the work of his predecessors. Like Amos, he denounced the deeds of injustice wherewith the rich nobles oppressed the poor, and foretold the inevitable punishment unless they should repent. Like Amos, he declared that what Jehovah desires is not burnt offerings but right conduct toward all men. Although these ideas were not original with Isaiah, he expressed them in his own way, and in language unsurpassed for beauty and force. As a splendid example of his eloquence, we may take his Song of the Vineyard. This was probably delivered at some public festival, when the people were being entertained by professional singers and story-tellers. (See Isa. 5:1-24.)

Isaiah also took up Hosea's message of the loving forgiveness of God. He had himself experienced that

forgiveness in the vision of God which made him a prophet. So he calls to his people in tender accents:

"Come now, let us reason together, saith Jehovah;  
Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall become white as snow;  
Though they be as red as crimson they shall become as wool."  
(Isa. 1:18.)

Like Hosea, he believed that the nation would be chastened by Jehovah's punishment, and that a "righteous remnant" would come forth from the fires of war and exile, to be in very truth Jehovah's holy nation. (See Isa. 1:25-26.)

Isaiah himself did what he could to organize the nucleus of this "righteous remnant," by gathering a group of disciples, and carefully instructing them in the true religion of Jehovah. (See Isa. 8:16-17.) No doubt they used to gather in his house in groups to listen to his teaching, and to ask him questions.

#### ISAIAH AS A STATESMAN

In these ideas, Isaiah was merely carrying on the work of his predecessors. One important service which he rendered to his countrymen was, however, original with him and that was the wise and statesmanlike counsel which he gave to those in authority when outside enemies threatened to attack the nation. At such times most of the leading men in Judah were eager to make alliances with other nations against the enemy. Judah was frequently involved in the long series of conspiracies against Assyria, which at that time was the chief enemy of all of the smaller nations. Messengers came again and again to Jerusalem from the Philistines, from Tyre and Sidon, from Egypt and from far distant Babylon, which at that time was a subject state under Assyria.

Egypt was at the bottom of most of these plots, for she was jealous of the Assyrian power. She would have preferred to send her own tribute-collectors among these small principalities. The king of Judah, during most of this period, was Hezekiah (from 715 to 686 B.C.)

He was on the whole a good ruler, but he was foolish enough to listen to many of these delegations of envoys. It must be remembered, however, that these were years which tried men's souls. No one could be sure but that within a few months the Assyrian army might be laying siege to Jerusalem. Before the eyes of every one there hovered the dreadful spectre of the city in flames, blood flowing like rivers in the streets, and the soldiers of the enemy, more like wild beasts than men, ravaging, without mercy, in every home. We can easily understand why Hezekiah and his subjects frequently became panic-stricken, and were tempted to believe the fair-sounding promises of the envoys, especially those from rich and powerful Egypt. All the more, however, must we admire the calmness, and the deep-rooted faith in God, with which Isaiah through all these troubled years gave his nation the following wise counsel: "Trust in God, and keep out of these alliances."

Isaiah reasoned that most of these nations were broken reeds on which to lean; and that anyway their promises were worthless. Judah would be thrown to the wolves, the moment her professed allies could gain any advantage by it. Furthermore, these alliances would involve the nation in wars which might otherwise be avoided. It was a small country situated back in the hills, away from the main highways of trade, and did not possess great wealth to attract the invader. Let the people remain quiet in their mountain fastnesses, minding their own business and trusting in God, and the storms of war might pass to one side. (See Isa. 30: 1-7; 31: 1-3.)

To some extent Isaiah's advice seems to have been heeded. At any rate, during these years, Jerusalem escaped pillage, although in 701 B.C. many of the smaller towns in Judah were captured and ravaged by the Assyrian emperor, Sennacherib.

## ISAIAH'S STATESMANSHIP VINDICATED

The most dramatic incident in Isaiah's career as a statesman occurred in the year that Sennacherib set out on a campaign against Egypt. While passing down the seacoast west of Judah, he sent messengers to Jerusalem, demanding the surrender of the city. Probably he did not like the idea of leaving so strong a fortress as Jerusalem in his rear, and hence determined to frighten the city into a surrender, if possible, and then break down its walls. In dismay, Hezekiah turned to Isaiah. Once again the prophet was calm when everyone else was in a panic. All these years, he had been saying that if Judah would keep out of alliances with other nations, and trust Jehovah, they would be kept in peace and safety. Now came the test of his faith. At this time Judah had been following Isaiah's advice and was not entangled in any coalition. Would Jehovah do His part? Isaiah's faith did not flinch from the test. He advised Hezekiah to pay no attention to Sennacherib's insolent demands. "He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow therein." Jehovah, he said, had indeed used Assyria in times past as an instrument to punish sinful Israel. But now Jehovah would punish Assyria herself, for her arrogant pride. (Isa. 10:15.)

Isaiah's predictions were fulfilled. Sennacherib quickly returned to Nineveh, partly because he found that the Egyptian forces were stronger than he had supposed; and also because a terrible pestilence attacked his own army as they were encamped near the low marshes on the Egyptian border.

## THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

Like Amos and Hosea, Isaiah from time to time put some of his addresses into written form. In his later years he also wrote a brief account of some of his earlier experiences as a prophet. These writings were carefully cherished by his followers, especially after his death, and many copies were made. Sometimes there would

be a little space left at the end of a book-roll. It is probable that the owner of the roll, to save expense, would frequently use this space for copying some sermon or address by another prophet than Isaiah. Thus as time went on, the book grew; and in its present form it seems to be in reality a collection of prophetical writings by a number of different authors. It was still known, however, as the book of Isaiah, although the words of the original Isaiah are probably found only in the first thirty-nine chapters, and, chiefly, in chapters 1-13, and 28-32. In later chapters we shall learn more of the other writings which were eventually included in the book.

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Compare the different ways in which Amos, Hosea and Isaiah came to be prophets. What experience was common to each of the three? (See Amos 7: 14-15 and chapter seventeen of this text book; also Isa. 6 and the first part of this chapter).

2. "In resting and quietness shall be your strength." Did Isaiah mean that if the nation of Judah would trust God, no trouble would ever come to them? If not, what did he mean?

3. How is the above promise of strength illustrated in the fact that Isaiah himself was able to give wise counsel to the people, when others lost their heads?

4. How should faith in God be a source of physical health and of healing in time of sickness?

5. If Isaiah were a citizen of the United States today, what side would he take on the question of a strong navy? Would he be in favor of from two to four new battleships each year?

6. Your favorite verse or passage? Suggested chapters: Isaiah 1, 5, 30.

## To SUM UP

1. What event in the history of Judah caused Isaiah, as a youth, to feel especially anxious for his nation?



2. What experience led him into the work of a prophet?
3. What truths proclaimed by Amos and Hosea did Isaiah continue to proclaim?
4. What was Isaiah's special service to his nation, in addition to his work as a preacher?
5. What foreign policy did Isaiah persistently advocate for his nation?
6. What were the reasons for this policy?
7. Was Isaiah's advice followed?
8. When and how was the wisdom of this advice triumphantly vindicated?
9. What portions of the present book of Isaiah came from Isaiah himself?
10. How did it come about that passages were added from later writers?

## CHAPTER XX

### A GREAT PROPHET AND HIS FAITHFUL SECRETARY

#### BARUCH'S RECORD OF JEREMIAH'S LIFE

After the four great prophets, Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah, there followed a time when the people went back to their old ways. This was when the wicked king Manasseh was on the throne of Judah. (686-641 B.C.) Micah and Isaiah had been fortunate in seeing many of their teachings accepted and obeyed, especially during the reign of Hezekiah. But Manasseh was a bad son of a good father. Under his leadership, the people even persecuted those who followed the teaching of the prophets. Most of those who were persecuted remained steadfast. But it was not until the latter half of the century (after about 640 B.C.), that the voice of the prophets again became a power in the land. In 639 B.C., a new king named Josiah came to the throne. He was at that time only eight years old; but the queen-mother was a friend of the prophets and encouraged them in their work, and Josiah was trained in the same attitude from the beginning. At this time, new dangers were threatening the nation from outside her borders. Although the Assyrian empire had passed the zenith of its glory and was destined within a few decades to disappear from the stage of history, there were other strong and aggressive nations whose ambitions meant trouble for little Judah. Egypt was becoming more dangerous, for after centuries of misrule and anarchy a strong dynasty had come into power. Most important of all, the old kingdom of Babylon was coming to the front. This new Babylonian empire conquered Assyria,

and Babylon, instead of Nineveh, became the world's chief city. Its pomp and glory made it one of the wonders of the world. The danger of foreign invasion helped to arrest the attention of the people of Judah, and won a hearing for the prophets as the spokesmen of Jehovah. There were four prophets during this period, whose writings are preserved under their names in the Old Testament. These are Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Jeremiah. Of these four, only Jeremiah belongs in the same class with the great names of the preceding century. He alone was a genius of the first rank. His career extended over forty years, from about 625 to 580 B.C.

#### JEREMIAH'S PROPHETIC CALL AND HIS EARLY ADDRESSES

Jeremiah was born in Anathoth, a little village about an hour's walk north of Jerusalem, within the borders of the tribes of Benjamin. Undoubtedly he possessed copies of the writings of the earlier prophets and studied them diligently. He seems to have been influenced most deeply by Hosea. As he read these books, and then observed the life and conduct of the people of his own time, he saw that the same evils still flourished against which those great men had fought. Gradually he came to feel it laid upon him as a sacred duty that he should take up their work and proclaim anew their message. So he went up from his home in Anathoth and in the public squares of Jerusalem began his career as a preacher. Two of the addresses which he delivered in these years have been preserved in the early part of the book which bears his name. In the first few lines of quotation below, the prophet puts into words the better impulses of the nation, which he hopes to be able to arouse, and then he gives the answer of Jehovah.

##### *The prayer of the Israelites:*

"A voice is heard on the bare heights, the supplications of the weeping Israelites:

Behold we come to thee, for thou art Jehovah our God.

We would lie down in shame and let confusion cover us.  
For we and our fathers have sinned against our God, from  
our youth even to this day,  
And we have not heeded the voice of Jehovah our God."

*The answer of Jehovah:*

"If thou wilt return, O Israel, thou mayest return to me,  
And if thou wilt put away thy vileness, thou shalt not be  
banished from my presence." (Jer. 3:21-4:1.)

Partly as a result of Jeremiah's splendid appeals a great reformation was carried out in Judah. At the command of the good king Josiah, all idols and idolatrous altars were destroyed in conformity with the revised law book, Deuteronomy (see II Kings 23). Jeremiah evidently was not entirely satisfied with this reformation, for it is not mentioned in any of his writings.

Probably it seemed to him too external and too much a matter of outward form rather than of inward thoughts and motives. Yet for king Josiah himself, Jeremiah felt a warm regard as one "who executed law and justice, and judged the cause of the poor and needy." (Jer. 22:15-16.)

#### ANOTHER RELAPSE IN JUDAH. THE FINAL HARVEST OF FOLLY

In 608 B.C., Josiah's noble reign was ended. He was killed in a battle with the Egyptians near Megiddo, in central Palestine. His son Jehoiakim was placed on the throne by the Egyptians as their vassal. He was just like his grandfather Manasseh, selfish, dishonest, and vain. All the evil elements in the nation were now set free, to do their worst. The new king was chiefly interested in his new and costly palace on which he compelled his subjects to labor without pay. He was utterly without wisdom in his foreign policy, and at that time wisdom was sorely needed. The Egyptian rule in Palestine came to an end in 605 B.C., through the great battle of Carchemish, on the Euphrates. Here Necho, the Egyptian king, was defeated by Nebuchadrezzar

of Babylon, and for the next half century Babylon was mistress of southwestern Asia. On the whole, the Babylonians ruled justly. Nebuchadrezzar ranks with the leading monarchs of history. Had the leaders of Judah been willing to submit to his authority, Jerusalem might have survived for an indefinite period. But Egypt began again to stir up rebellion among the minor nations in Palestine. Jeremiah warned the king and people against listening to the promises of the Egyptians. Nevertheless, in 600 B.C., Jehoiakim rebelled. In 598, Nebuchadrezzar was besieging Jerusalem with a powerful army. Jehoiakim died during the siege, and his brother, Jehoiachin, surrendered. He was taken away to Babylon as a captive along with about thirty thousand others, men, women and children. Nebuchadrezzar did not destroy the city itself. Another brother of Jehoiakim, named Zedekiah, was left as a vassal ruler.

One would think that Judah would now have learned her lesson, but there was a group of selfish, unprincipled nobles who seemed bent on their country's complete ruin. The king, Zedekiah, was a well-meaning man, and a friend of Jeremiah, but he was weak. In 588 B.C., encouraged by fine-sounding promises from Egypt, the nation joined with the Ammonites, the Moabites, and the Phoenicians in another coalition against Babylon. Jeremiah protested against such an alliance, but in vain. In 586 B.C., Jerusalem was captured by the Babylonians and burned. The temple was destroyed and the walls of the city were levelled to the ground. Zedekiah's eyes were put out, and again many thousands of the inhabitants were led away as exiles. It was nearly a century before hope and prosperity began to return to the discouraged, poverty-stricken land.

These two decades were as a living death to Jeremiah. He was an ardent patriot, but he was compelled to witness his nation's ruin. As he was not carried away into exile by the Babylonians, he saw everything from the first siege of Jerusalem, in 597, until the end. He was natur-



ally a lover of peace, and craved the sympathy and goodwill of his fellow men, yet his conscience compelled him to continue his stern denunciations. (Jer. 20:8-10.)

Even his own people in Anathoth turned against him, and joined in a plot to kill him. During the last siege of Jerusalem, he was hated and despised as a traitor. Once he was thrown into a dungeon to perish, and was saved only by the friendliness of a negro servant. His closing years were spent among the Jews in Egypt, and according to tradition he was killed by his fellow-exiles, whose idolatrous practices he had rebuked. Thus he spent his life in an apparently fruitless effort to save his people from their sins. To the very end, his life was one long story of hardship and suffering.

#### JEREMIAH'S VALUABLE HELPER. BARUCH, THE PROPHET SCRIBE

That Jeremiah was able to keep up the fight so long and so faithfully, was due in large part to the fact that during at least the last twenty years of his life he had a remarkable partner in his work. In the latter part of Jehoiakim's reign, about 600 B. C., Jeremiah was positively forbidden to speak any more to the people, but he was not the man to retire from the fight when he could still speak through the written page. Like the apostle Paul, he was not skilful with the pen, but he had a friend named Baruch, who had been trained as a scribe, and who was himself a prophet and a good public speaker. So Jeremiah dictated to Baruch a number of his addresses. Then on a certain fast day, when a large gathering had assembled in the temple court, Baruch took the written roll, and read it before the people. He made a deep impression on his hearers, all the deeper because of the reverence with which all writings were then regarded. Some of the better class of nobles who were in the gathering borrowed the roll and read it before the king. It was a chilly day in winter, and a charcoal fire was burning in an open brazier near the king's chair. From time to



time, as the reader finished a column of the writing, Jehoiakim reached forward and cut off that portion of the roll, and in spite of the protests of some who were present, threw it on the fire. Thus the entire roll was burned. Jeremiah, however, dictated a second and longer manuscript, containing the addresses that had been burned and a number of others. No doubt Baruch was able to read these addresses to many groups of listeners. This was the beginning of a long partnership. It was surely fortunate that these two men were thus brought together. To a large extent, Baruch became Jeremiah's mouthpiece.

### THE BOOK OF BARUCH

Although Jeremiah's work seemed comparatively fruitless while he was alive, yet few if any of the prophets wielded a greater influence on subsequent generations. This was due to a book which Baruch prepared about his great friend and teacher. The nucleus of this book was the second collection of addresses which he had made after Jehoiakim burned the first one. To these addresses, Baruch added others including probably some extracts from a diary which Jeremiah had kept. Furthermore, he wrote a brief biography of the man, telling of the most important events in his career. He told of the conflict with the false prophets, who kept saying to the people.

"Peace, peace, when there is no peace." (Jer. 6:14.)

He told of a sensational speech which Jeremiah once made in the temple court, when he actually likened the temple itself to a den of robbers, because of the rich and wicked nobles who were frequently seen offering sacrifices there and who thought the city was safe from Jehovah's punishment, because "the temple of Jehovah is here." Jeremiah, on the contrary, declared that the temple itself would be destroyed, along with the rest of the city, if its leaders continued to steal and lie, and murder and commit adultery. Baruch tells us that Jeremiah was arrested and put on trial for his life as a result of this

speech, and only escaped because he had one influential friend among the nobles. (See Jer. 26:1-24.) This remarkable biography also tells of the dramatic object lessons with which Jeremiah sought to compel the attention of the people and to impress the truth upon their minds. It tells how he had smashed an earthenware jug before them, as a symbol of the total destruction which their sins were bringing upon Jerusalem; how he made a wooden yoke and wore it publicly, as a symbol of the inevitable rule of Nebuchadrezzar, against which it would be madness to rebel; and how when a false prophet took the wooden yoke and broke it, Jeremiah returned the next day with an iron one. (See Jer. 27:1—28:17.) Finally the book contained an account of some of the many hardships and persecutions which the prophet suffered during those last years in the besieged city, in the desolated land, and among the exiles in Egypt.

This biographical sketch, with the addresses by Jeremiah, Baruch put together in a book of considerable length, which (with some additions from later scribes) is known to us today as the book of Jeremiah in the Old Testament. It could be called, quite as truly, the book of Baruch. Judging from the sections which were written by Baruch, he was a man of great intellectual ability, as well as nobility of character. His anecdotes about Jeremiah are skilfully told, and bring clearly before us the prophet's personality. The book was a priceless contribution to the great cause which they both had served so long and faithfully.

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. In what respect does Jeremiah remind you,  
(a) of Amos?

(b) of Hosea?

(c) of Isaiah?

2. Which of the following characteristics do you especially notice in his literary style: pathos, conciseness, musical rhythm, figurativeness?

3. In what ways was Baruch a help to Jeremiah?

4. Why was Jeremiah's later influence greatly increased by Baruch's biographical narrative?

5. In what respect is the "book of Baruch" (that is the Old Testament book of Jeremiah) like the Gospel narratives in the New Testament?

6. Mention any verse or passage from Jeremiah which you specially admire. Suggested readings: Jer. 8:18—9:1; 26:1-24; 27:1—28:17.

## TO SUM UP

1. How long a period intervened between Isaiah and Jeremiah?
2. Outline briefly the history of Judah, during this period.
3. What events prepared the way for a revival of the work of the prophets?
4. Where was Jeremiah born?
5. Was he naturally bold or shy, stern or tender, sociable or fond of solitude?
6. How was Jeremiah connected with the reformation under Josiah?
7. In what way was Jeremiah's life peculiarly sad?
8. Mention some hardships which he had to endure?
9. How does it happen that we know so much about Jeremiah's personal history?
10. How and when did Jeremiah and Baruch first come to be associated?
11. How long were they together?
12. Of what elements is the book of Jeremiah in the Old Testament made up?

## NOTEBOOK WORK

Clip out from your copies of the Old Testament the following sections from the book of Jeremiah, which probably come from Baruch's biography. Jer. 26:1-24; 36:1-32; 34:1-22; 37:1-38; 28a; 39:15-18; 40:7-16; 41:1-17; 42:1-22; 43:1-13; 44:1-30. The above is probably the original order.

## CHAPTER XXI

### LESSONS FROM A NATION'S MISFORTUNES

#### THE HISTORICAL BOOKS FROM JOSHUA TO II KINGS

(The great historical narratives of the Hebrews were for the most part the product of groups of writers, working in co-operation.) The first of these was a group of prophets, in the period after Elijah, who wrote the Judean-Ephraimite history. (See chapter XV.) The next important group lived about two centuries later, about 650 B.C. It is to this group that we are chiefly indebted for the books of Joshua, Judges, I and II Samuel, and I and II Kings in their present form. These men were closely associated and played an important part as religious leaders in the history of Judah. They probably lived as a little community, in some large house, or group of houses, in Jerusalem. They began their life as a community during the wicked reign of Manasseh. They helped in the reforms of Josiah. They were at work during the evil days of Jehoiakim. Jeremiah must have known them, and may sometimes have been a guest at their house, although he did not entirely sympathize with their ideas. (Finally, when Jerusalem was destroyed, some of the members of their organization were carried away to Babylon, where for a time they were able to continue their writing. As a group, they are generally called the Deuteronomists.)

This word is applied to them, because their chief purpose in writing history was to persuade their countrymen to obey the laws in the revised book, now called Deuteronomy. They were probably among the leaders who persuaded King Josiah to adopt it.

This explains why they began their history with

Joshua. According to their ideas, the substance of the law had been given to the nation just before the death of Moses, and the settlement in Canaan, under Joshua. Hence they were not interested in the history before that time.

They sought to show, through history, that all the troubles of the nation were the consequences of disobedience to God's commands as these had been revealed in that law-book. The whole course of their national history seemed to them a proof of their belief. "When we obeyed this law," so they argued, "we were prosperous and happy." "When we were disobedient, especially when we worshipped idols, calamities came."

#### THEIR METHODS OF WORK

We may imagine that these co-operative historians had a common room in which to do their work. They would have writing-tables, blank rolls of leather for writing, and pens and ink. To this headquarters each one brought every scrap of writing which he could find which would throw light upon the history of the nation. Thus they had a copy of the old Judean-Ephraimite history, and made large use of it. Their chief desire, of course, was to find illustrations in the history for the ideas they were trying to teach. There was undoubtedly joy among them when some member brought in a history of the prophet Samuel. He had picked up the manuscript while on a trip to the northern part of the country. In the house of some friendly prophet, not far perhaps from Samuel's old home, Shiloh, our traveller had discovered this written roll, and had hastened back to Jerusalem to make a copy of it. It told among other things how Saul had been deposed from his kingship, because he had disobeyed Jehovah's command by offering sacrifices in an unlawful manner. "Good!" said all the workers when it was read to them. "We can use every word of that in our history! If Saul had obeyed this law



(Deuteronomy), his descendants might have been kings of Israel today."

These Deuteronomic writers were not experts in judging of the accuracy of the records they found. They were ~~not~~ trained in such matters. They would sometimes copy into their own book two different accounts of the same event without even noticing the contradictions between them. It is fortunate for us, therefore, that they did not write the narratives in their own words, except when they could find nothing from an earlier writer which brought out the religious doctrines they were trying to teach. As far as possible, they copied word for word the older records, many of which were very accurate. This was their most important service for posterity. What a discovery it would be, if someone should uncover, some day, the ruins of this old literary work-shop under the streets of modern Jerusalem, and should find, amidst the mold, the original manuscripts which were gathered from all parts of the land. Many a disputed question would be answered.

#### THE BOOKS OF JOSHUA AND JUDGES

We first meet with the work of the Deuteronomists in the book of Joshua. This was the point at which their interest in the history began. The Judean-Ephraimite history had given a very accurate account of the settlement of the Hebrews in Canaan (see chapter XVI), and the Deuteronomists copied long passages from it. This older history told how under Joshua's leadership the Hebrews had gained a foothold in the land; but it was made clear that for many decades, they had a hard struggle with the earlier Canaanites, so that it was not until the time of David that all the old Canaanite cities were conquered. But to the Deuteronomists it was simply inconceivable that an upright leader like Joshua, the trusted servant of Moses, should not have been rewarded by Jehovah with an immediate victory over all the Canaanites.

So we find passages in the book of Joshua, evidently from their hand, which contain statements such as these: "So Jehovah gave to Israel all the land which he promised with an oath to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it, and dwelt in it. . . . Not a man of all their enemies stood before them; Jehovah delivered all their enemies into their power." (Josh. 21:43-45.)

But how could they explain those earlier statements regarding the hard struggles with the original Canaanites which continued for a century or two. "Those," they answered, "were the result of the disobedience of the people after the death of Joshua, which made it necessary for Jehovah again and again to give them back into the power of their old enemies, to punish them." So the Deuteronomists wrote a second book, the book of Judges, in which they continued the story in accordance with this theory. Into this book they inserted the earlier narratives about the champions who lived after Joshua's time, using for each story the same introductory form of words. (See Judges 4:2; 6:1; 10:7; 15:1.)

### THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL

The two books known as First and Second Samuel are really a single composition and are so printed in the Hebrew Bible. They take their name from the prophet Samuel, who is one of the leading characters in the early part of the narratives. There is no reason to suppose that anything in either of the books was written by Samuel himself. The two books together cover a period of about seventy-five years, from the birth of Samuel to the closing years of David. They are made up largely of quotations, from the biography of Samuel, mentioned above, and from the early biographies of Saul and David, mentioned in chapter XV.

In these books of Samuel the Deuteronomists did not find it necessary to add many supplementary statements of their own. The older manuscripts from which they quoted all brought out clearly and forcibly the truth

which they were seeking to teach. Saul was rejected as king, by Jehovah, because he disobeyed Jehovah's commands. David's lapses into sin brought upon him a long train of disasters. If even David was thus punished, who, notwithstanding his grave faults, was on the whole a good man, how much more would the sins of the people of Judah lead to a stern retribution!

### THE BOOKS OF KINGS

The first and second books of Kings, like the books of Samuel, are really a single work, continuing the thread of the history from the death of David to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar. For this period the Deuteronomists were not able to find so many good historical records. Solomon, however, had established the office of the royal scribe, and from the court records left by these officials, the dates of the most important events could be learned. The priests in the temple at Jerusalem kept similar records of events of special interest to them. There was also a short book of stories about the prophet Elijah, and another about his successor, Elisha.

In this part of their history the Deuteronomists continued to emphasize the certainty of Jehovah's rewards and retributions. Those kings who "did evil in the sight of Jehovah" were represented as speedily punished, while those who did right were described as prosperous. They were especially severe on those kings who neglected the temple at Jerusalem, and patronized the local shrines elsewhere. They explained the early downfall of the northern kingdom as due to the fact that Jeroboam I had set up shrines at Bethel and Dan, thus keeping the people from worshipping at Jerusalem. In this they were not altogether just. For while the influence of these local shrines had been on the side of idolatry, yet no one, until the prophets Amos and Hosea, had realized this fact; nor had the worship at these shrines been forbidden, until the Deuteronomic revision was adopted;

but they supposed that this prohibition had been in force from the beginning.

As religious teachers, the Deuteronomists were more nearly right than as historians, and we are stirred by the earnestness of their moral and religious purposes. Fortunately, we are able to get our knowledge of the historical facts from the earlier sources which they quoted.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. What would be a suitable title for the Deuteronomic history as a whole, as it is found in Joshua to II Kings?
  
2. Do you think that the downfall of the Hebrew kingdoms was caused entirely by the sins of the people?
  
3. Is it true that the wicked are *always* punished, the good *always* rewarded?
  
4. How is goodness rewarded, and wickedness punished, today?
  
5. Mention your favorite verse or passage in the books discussed in this chapter. Suggested readings: I Samuel 15 (from the Samuel biography), I Kings 17-19 (from a book of stories about Elijah.)

TO SUM UP

1. What is the connection between the revised law book Deuteronomy, and the historical books Joshua to II Kings?
2. Why did the Deuteronomists begin their historical writing just at this point, that is, with Joshua?
3. How long were these men associated together?
4. What earlier writings did the Deuteronomists use?
5. What was the chief religious teaching of the Deuteronomists?

6. What events in the history of Israel seemed to them to prove this teaching?

7. How accurate are the Deuteronomists, historically, as compared with the earlier historians, from whom they quote?



## CHAPTER XXII

### COMFORTERS AND GUIDES IN DARK DAYS

EZEKIEL, HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH, AND OTHERS

(Before the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., the message of the prophets had been largely a stern one. The people had needed to be rebuked for their sins, and warned regarding the consequences which were sure to follow. When Jerusalem finally lay in total ruin, however, the time had come for a different note to be sounded. In place of denunciation, the survivors of the catastrophe were now in need of hope and comfort.) The land was exhausted from the long siege. Many had been slain in battle. Some thirty thousand others, men, women and children, had been compelled to tread the long and bitter pathway of exile, from Judah to Babylonia — a thousand mile journey on foot. Multitudes of others fled to Egypt for safety, and many remained there permanently. Those who remained in Judah probably suffered most of all. For more than a century the land was in disorder. Bands of robbers preyed at will upon the helpless farmers and shepherds. Starvation, bloodshed and torture were everyday experiences. In their despair, the people were saying that Jehovah had forgotten His people or had wholly forsaken them. Those who were scattered in foreign lands were tempted to give up entirely the religion of Jehovah, and become like the heathen among whom they lived. So it is not surprising that the prophetic writings from the period after the fall of Judah are very different in tone and purpose from those of the earlier time; and that messages of comfort and promises of a return from exile take the place of denunciation.

(Among the first to strike the new note was Jeremiah.) In one of his later sayings he declared that a better day was surely coming, when Jehovah would write His law, not on stone tablets, but on the hearts of His people. He also made clear his belief that the sunlight of peace and prosperity would again shine upon the land.

#### A JEWISH PROPHET "BY THE RIVERS OF BABYLON"

(Among the exiles who were taken to Babylonia by Nebuchadrezzar, after the first siege of Jerusalem (597 B.C.), was a young priest named Ezekiel. He began his work as a prophet soon after reaching the new country.) The Jews were not prisoners, but were allowed to live together in a group of small villages, supporting themselves by farming and commerce. Near their settlement ran the Kabar canal ("the river Chebar, in Ezekiel"). The waters of these canals were used in the irrigation of the wonderfully fertile soil. No doubt boats also passed up and down the canal, laden with merchandise. (There was no reason, therefore, why the Jewish exiles should not take up the thread of their life, and continue their national customs and religion much as before they were taken captives. At first they were slow in adapting themselves cheerfully to the new conditions. Jerusalem was not finally destroyed until 586 B.C., and previous to this date, these exiles kept hoping that almost any day they would be able to return to the home-land.) In his earlier addresses, Ezekiel tried to combat these false hopes. But when the news finally came that Nebuchadrezzar had captured and destroyed Jerusalem, even burning the temple of Jehovah, their spirit seemed utterly broken. (From this time on, therefore, Ezekiel set himself to the task of encouraging these disheartened men and women. They needed something to live for, something to look forward to; and the prophet now insisted with all earnestness that the time would surely come when Jehovah would bring back to Judah her exiled sons and daughters and restore their nation to its former

glory, leading them in victory against all their enemies. He drew up an elaborate program of the future restoration of the nation, as he hoped that it would come to pass.) In this program, Ezekiel shows his priestly training. The center of everything in the new age was to be the temple of Jehovah in Jerusalem. For the construction of this temple he actually gives a full set of plans and specifications. (Ezek. 40-43.)

(Ezekiel also had felt the influence of the earlier prophets, and in many sayings dwelt on the necessity of right conduct toward other men.) To us, these latter sayings are the most valuable, such as his promise of Jehovah's blessing upon the man who will "wrong no one, restore the debtor his pledge, take nought by robbery, give his bread to the hungry, and clothe the naked." (Ezek. 18: 5-9.)

#### EZEKIEL'S PREDICTIONS FULFILLED. THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

(In the years 520-516 B.C., the temple at Jerusalem was actually rebuilt. At that time, Persia instead of Babylonia was the imperial nation in Asia. Cyrus the Great had conquered Babylon in 538 B.C., and had given permission to the exiles in that land to return to their homes. Some of the more patriotic Jews took advantage of this edict, and coming back to Judah, helped to bring new life and hope to the discouraged people there. Finally in 520 B.C., a movement was started to rebuild the temple. The leaders in this movement were two prophets, Zechariah and Haggai.) Zechariah was probably one of the exiles who had returned from Babylon. Haggai's addresses are preserved in the two chapters of his short book. He was not especially profound or original in his ideas, but as a practical leader, he served his people well.

"Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts (says Haggai); This people say, the time is not come for Jehovah's house to be built . . . Is it a time for you to dwell in

your ceiled houses, while this house lieth waste? . . . Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Consider your ways. Go up to the hill-country, and bring wood, and build the house, and I will take pleasure in it, . . . saith Jehovah." (Hag. 1:2-8.)

So they organized the first church building society on record. Wood was brought in from the surrounding forests; the carpenters went to work with a will, and after about four years the new temple was finished. It was a long, hard struggle for the poverty-stricken people of Judah; and they never could have carried it through to completion had not Haggai and Zechariah kept cheering them on.

"ARE WE TO HAVE OUR OWN KING AGAIN?"

(There was another matter in which these two prophets were deeply interested, and that was the re-establishment of Judah as an independent kingdom, with a descendant of David on the throne.) The year 520 B.C., and the two or three years immediately thereafter, seemed opportune for such a step. The Persian empire was apparently falling to pieces. Cambyeses, the son of Cyrus, had proved a weak ruler, and had finally committed suicide. A certain Darius had been nominated for the throne by the nobles, but nearly every province was in revolt against him, and it seemed unlikely that he could ever become the master of the situation. In Judah the Persian authorities had already appointed as governor a certain Zerubbabel, who was related to the Davidic family. To the proud Jews, *King* Zerubbabel sounded far better than *Governor* Zerubbabel. Both Haggai and Zechariah were enthusiastic leaders in this movement. They promised Jehovah's blessing upon the undertaking, and painted bright pictures of the future, under Zerubbabel's rule.

All these hopes were doomed to disappointment. Months and years passed, and Zerubbabel could never claim any title higher than governor. Judah remained

a Persian province. But Zechariah, at any rate, was great enough to rise above this disappointment, and continued to cheer and encourage his people. He was careful also to emphasize the conditions which must be fulfilled, to make it possible for Jehovah to bless them.

"These are the things that ye shall do. Speak ye every man the truth with his neighbor; render peaceful decisions in your gates; and let none of you devise evil in his heart against his neighbor; and love no false oath; for all these are things which I hate, saith Jehovah." (Zech. 8:16-17.) Evidently Zechariah also had caught the spirit of the great prophets who had preceded him, from Amos to Jeremiah. What he chiefly hoped for was not the outward splendor of a king, but the more real and lasting glory of truth and kindness and justice in their national life.

#### PREDICTIONS OF HAPPIER DAYS, BY UNNAMED AUTHORS

One way in which the Jews of this period sought comfort and inspiration was in the reading of the earlier prophetic writings. While these earlier writings were deeply revered, it was often felt that the stern rebukes and warnings with which these were filled were not entirely applicable to the poor and oppressed people of the later time. Occasionally a scribe would feel moved to add a few words in a more hopeful and comforting tone at the bottom of a column or at the end of a roll, to bring the manuscript, as it were, down to date. We find such short passages in many places, sprinkled through the writings of these prophets who wrote before the destruction of Jerusalem. One such passage is found at the end of the book of Amos.

The author probably lived in the ruined city of Jerusalem, perhaps about the year 500 B.C. Reading his copy of the "words of Amos," he came to the closing sentence:



"Behold the eyes of the Lord Jehovah are upon the sinful kingdom,  
And I will destroy it from the face of the earth."

His soul had been thrilled by the splendid earnestness of the book; but this closing sentence left him with a heavy heart. "Have we not been punished enough?" he said to himself, as he thought of the battered-down walls of the city, and the wretched collection of hovels where once beautiful mansions had stood. Surely the day is coming when Jehovah will bless, not punish. He took his pen and wrote a few more hopeful words as follows:

"In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up its ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old. Behold the days come, saith Jehovah, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring back the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall not more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them, saith Jehovah thy God." (Amos 9: 12-15.)

Among the best-known of these later passages which were probably added in this way, are Isaiah 9:1-17, and 11:1-10, which seem to come from the same author. These sections portray an ideal ruler. Perhaps they were written by someone in the time of Haggai and Zechariah, who hoped for great things from Zerubbabel. In former times these two passages were generally interpreted as predictions of the coming of Jesus. Jesus, however, chose to be a teacher, rather than an earthly ruler. Yet if a judge, or mayor, or governor, to-day, should wish to fulfil the duties of his office in the spirit



of Jesus, he might well take the following passage for his daily reading:

“The spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him,  
A spirit of wisdom and insight,  
A spirit of counsel and might,  
A spirit of knowledge and the fear of Jehovah.”  
(Isa. 11:2)

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Before the destruction of Jerusalem, the people were generally optimistic, and the true prophets seemingly pessimistic; after the destruction of Jerusalem, the people were pessimistic, and the true prophets optimistic. Explain.

2. Compare the following passages with reference to the kind of future blessing chiefly hoped for: Amos 9:12-14; Isa. 9:2-7; Ezekiel 42:1-7; Zechariah 8:1-3. Which of them is

(a) Material?

(b) Priestly?

(c) Moral?

3. Mention any passage in the writings discussed in this chapter, which specially appeal to you. Suggested readings: Ezek. 37. Isa. 11:1-9; Isa. 4:2-6; Zech. 8:1-17.

## TO SUM UP

1. What striking difference is noticeable between the prophetic writings before 586 B.C. and those after that date?

2. Describe the life of the Jewish exiles in Babylonia.

3. What prophet lived and preached among them?

4. How did he comfort his fellow-exiles?

5. What two prophets encouraged the people of Judah to rebuild the temple?

6. When was this second temple built?

7. Who was Zerubbabel?
8. What predictions were made regarding him by Haggai and Zechariah?
9. Why did it seem to them an opportune time for re-establishing an independent kingdom of Judah?
10. Why may we suppose that Isaiah 9:2-7, and 11:1-9, were written at about the same period with Haggai and Zechariah?
11. How did these and similar passages find their way into books written by earlier prophets?

## CHAPTER XXIII

### A NEW MESSAGE FOR THE OPPRESSED

#### THE SECOND PART OF ISAIAH

#### THE SERVANTS OF JEHOVAH

In times of general disorder and misfortune, there are always a few men who are unscrupulous enough to make capital out of the troubles of their fellow-men, and thus become prosperous. This was the case in the dark centuries following the destruction of Jerusalem. A little clique of Jewish nobles acquired power and influence by currying favor with their Babylonian and Persian rulers. Thus they were able to oppress without mercy their fellow-citizens whose lot was already hard enough. The poor were robbed of their little fields and houses, and many were sold into slavery.

(These down-trodden ones, on the other hand, remembered the bitter denunciations of Amos and the other prophets against the oppressors of an earlier day. They remembered, also, the just laws which had been handed down from the olden time; and the books containing these laws, and the addresses of the prophets, were widely read.) It is probable that little groups of people began to meet together in each other's homes to read these books, and to express their indignation against the rich nobles who were wronging them. The people who thus formed the habit of meeting together were called by various names. Sometimes they were called "the poor." Another name which they seem to have applied to themselves was "the servants of Jehovah."

Of course they were persecuted. It is always more politic, at least for the time being, to submit tamely to extortion and injustice. Because these men would not

submit, insults were hurled at them as they passed down the street. Slanders were circulated about them. And whenever any special misfortune came upon them, there were many to cry, "Aha! Aha! Where is their God?"

### WHY DO INNOCENT PERSONS SUFFER?

(These things were all the harder to hear because they had been trained in the doctrines of the Deuteronomists. They had been taught to believe that God always punishes the wicked, and rewards the upright. Yet, in their case, special devotion to Jehovah had apparently brought special suffering; while wickedness, on the other hand, seemed the sure pathway to fortune. They could find no answer to the question of their persecutors: "Where is thy God") . . . In their meetings there were even some who declared:

"Every one that doeth evil  
Is good in the sight of Jehovah,  
And he delighteth in them;  
Or where is the God of justice." (Mal. 2:17.)

(A partial solution for these perplexities was offered by the man who wrote the Book of Malachi. This book was probably written within a few decades after the rebuilding of the temple (about 475 B.C.). The name of the author we do not know. The word Malachi means "my messenger," and was placed on the title page by some scribe, who took it from the third chapter, the first verse. One of the chief purposes of this writer was to help these earnest men among "the poor" to hold fast to their faith in God's justice. He told them that their sufferings were only temporary. There would be a future day of recompense, when the wicked should be punished, and the righteous rewarded.)

### THE SECOND ISAIAH

(Sometime during this same period, probably within a few decades after the rebuilding of the temple, there

lived one of the greatest of the prophets of Israel. Great as he was, we do not even know his name. He is generally referred to as the "second Isaiah," because his writings are found in the latter part of the book which bears Isaiah's name (chapters 40-66). (Scholars are not even agreed as to whether he lived in Jerusalem or among the exiles in Babylon. Certainly his heart was always in Jerusalem) and like the author of Malachi, he was probably a leader among the "servants of Jehovah." (But though the world knows so little about his personal history, it can never forget his message. Like Amos and Hosea, he was one of the great prophets. His deep spiritual insight enabled him to understand in part, at least, the true reason why a just God sometimes permits innocent persons to suffer.

Like the author of Malachi, he believed with all his heart in a coming judgment, when God would bring to an end all oppression. Nothing in the Old Testament breathes a fiercer indignation against injustice.

"Jehovah hath seen it, and is displeased.  
And He is angry because there is no justice.  
He saw that there was no man  
And was astonished that there was none to interpose.

According to deserts will he recompense  
Wrath to his adversaries, disgrace to his foes;  
They shall see the name of Jehovah from the west,  
And his glory from the rising sun.

And so as a Redeemer he shall shortly come to Zion  
To turn away rebellion from Jacob." (Isa. 59: 15-20.)

(But in the meantime, these promises of future deliverance were of little comfort to those who were the chief sufferers from present wrongs. For such sufferers he had a great message, namely, that their sufferings, if patiently borne, might benefit others; and that by sharing in such unselfish suffering, we ourselves attain the greatest happiness and the highest glory of life. Scattered through



the latter part of Isaiah are a series of passages in which the author describes "the servant of Jehovah." They are generally called "the servant passages." In all these passages, the author is holding up before his people his ideal for them as individuals, and as a religious body.) The true servant of Jehovah, he says, is a teacher who leads men to the knowledge of God.

"Behold my servant whom I uphold,  
My chosen, in whom I take delight;  
I have put my spirit upon him,  
That he may set forth law to the nations." (Isa. 42: 1).

As a teacher, he will be quiet, unassuming, and patient; he will have sympathy for the weakness of his listeners.

"He will not cry aloud nor roar,  
Nor let his voice be heard in the street.  
A crushed reed he will not break,  
And a dimly burning wick he will not quench."  
(Isa. 42: 2-3.)

As a result of his teaching, the servant of Jehovah will inevitably be persecuted.

"My back I gave to smiters,  
And my cheek to those who plucked the beard.  
My face I hid not from insult and spitting." (Isa. 50: 6.)

But this persecution will not be endured in vain. In the sublime fifty-third chapter of the book, the author shows that this patient, heroic endurance of persecution may atone for the sins of others and win to lives of righteousness even the men who were wronging them.

The author of this matchless poem nowhere explains just how it is that the sufferings of the righteous may atone for the sins of the wicked. Perhaps he means that when a good man forgives an injury his forgiveness becomes as it were, a flower of good growing out of the evil, and thus turns all into good at last. At any rate, the faithful "servants of Jehovah" to whom this chapter was first addressed, must have been strangely comforted. They could now see that their sufferings were not in

vain. By patiently enduring the evils which were heaped upon them, they were helping Jehovah to conquer evil.

Christians have always loved this chapter, more perhaps than any other in the Old Testament. For although the author had in mind primarily those of his own day, yet it is only in Jesus Christ that we see the perfect servant of Jehovah, and the perfect fulfilment of this great ideal of unselfish suffering for the good even of the least deserving.

### QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Which prophet explains most satisfactorily why good people sometimes suffer: the author of Malachi, or the Second Isaiah?

2. "And his grave was made with the wicked" (Isa. 53:9). Was this detail fulfilled when Jesus was buried? In what sense is this chapter a prophecy of the sufferings and death of Jesus?

3. Which of the following historical characters most reminds you of the "servant of Jehovah," portrayed by the second Isaiah: Jefferson, Washington, Nathan Hale, Lincoln?

4. How can we be "servants of Jehovah"?

### TO SUM UP

1. What kind of men were most prosperous among the people of Judah during the period after the destruction of Jerusalem?

2. What kind of men were those who came to be known as the poor, or the servants of Jehovah?

3. How were their experiences contrary to the teaching of the Deuteronomists?

4. What perplexity thus arose in the minds of these "servants of Jehovah?"

5. When was the book of Malachi written?

6. How does it attempt to answer the perplexing questions referred to above?

7. What is the date of the addresses in Isaiah 40-66?

8. How do they explain the fact that good men often suffer hardship and persecution?

## CHAPTER XXIV

### A NEW KIND OF PATRIOTISM

#### THE HOPES OF THE SECOND ISAIAH

(We have seen in earlier chapters that patriotism was an essential element in the religion of the Hebrews. They looked upon Jehovah as the God of the nation, and of individuals only as they belonged to the nation. They believed that as the God of the nation Jehovah required each man to forget his selfish interests and work for the general welfare. In the early days, this belief was associated with crude and imperfect ideas. They thought that each nation had its own god and that Chemosh, the god of the Moabites, or Nebo and Marduk, gods of the Babylonians, were just as truly existent as Jehovah the God of Israel. They believed that each god was the special guardian of his own people, and would show them special favors.) This idea is even found in some of the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. (The great prophets from Amos onward began to break away from this idea. Amos declared that Jehovah had guided the history of other nations beside the Israelites. (Amos 9:7.) All of these prophets maintained that Jehovah was using the great empire of Assyria, and other foreign nations, to punish his people Israel for their sins. This implied that Jehovah was really the one true God of all mankind.)

(After the fall of Jerusalem, however, the old narrow type of religious patriotism received a fresh impulse. Many Jews regarded all foreign nations as enemies of Jehovah. There was a special bitterness against the nations immediately surrounding Judah, such as the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, and worst of all, the Edomites. These nations had taken advantage

of the helpless condition of the people of Judah, after the capture of Jerusalem, and had cruelly plundered and ravaged them. In the Book of Ezekiel, we find a series of chapters, declaring Jehovah's wrath against foreign nations.) (Chapters 25-32.) The Book of Obadiah (with its single chapter, the shortest book in the Old Testament) expresses the most passionate hatred of the Edomites. The book of Joel is a description of Jehovah's day of Judgment, which, according to this writer, was to bring a terrible punishment upon all the enemies of Israel.

### THE SECOND ISAIAH AS A PATRIOT

(Nowhere in the Old Testament do we find a more passionate love of country than in the second part of the Book of Isaiah. In this respect, the author of these chapters was a typical Hebrew. Like most of the other prophets of this period, his favorite theme is the coming restoration of his country's prosperity. "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God." He begins his book:

"Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and declare to her  
That her hard service is accomplished, her guilt is expiated,  
That she hath received from Jehovah's hand double for  
all her sins." (Isa. 40: 1-2.)

He is full of the thought that the exiled sons and daughters of Judah are shortly to return to the home land, from all the countries to which they have been scattered. (Isa. 49:12-13.) In his descriptions of the coming glory, he is more tender, and more rapturous than any other prophet. (Isa. 55:12-13.) (Through all these glowing promises there breathes the faith that Jehovah is the God of Israel, and that Israel is Jehovah's chosen people.) (Isa. 41: 8-10.)

### ISRAEL CHOSEN BY JEHOVAH TO BLESS MANKIND

(Although this prophet held fast to his faith that his beloved nation was in a special sense the people of Jehovah,

yet the experiences of those days inevitably broadened his ideas. After all, Judea was only a little province in a great empire. Very likely he had travelled, and had seen with his own eyes the glories of Egypt, or Babylon, or Persia. At any rate, he frequently came into contact with such foreigners as the governor of the province, or his officers, and realized their ability and their many virtues. Nevertheless when he compared the religion of Israel, as taught by the prophets, with the religion of these foreigners, the contrast was striking. He saw these people actually worshipping images of wood and stone; bowing down to them as to real deities. It seemed to him actually funny; and he brings out the humor of it, in such passages as the following, in which he addresses the foreigners:

“To whom then will ye liken God,  
And what likeness place beside him?  
An image! a craftsman cast it,  
And a smelter overlays it with gold!” (Isa. 40: 18-19.)

“One cuts down cedar trees for his use  
And chooses a cypress or oak,  
Half of it, he burns in the fire  
And upon its coals, roasts flesh,  
He eats the roast and is satisfied!  
He warms himself, and says Aha!  
The rest of it he makes into a god,  
He bows down to his image and worships it,  
And prays to it and says:  
Deliver me, for thou art my god.” (Isa. 44: 14-17.)

In contrast with these dead idols the prophet never tires of dwelling on the infinite greatness and majesty of Jehovah, Ruler of the universe.

But how did it happen that this supreme God of heaven and earth had singled out one small nation, the Jews, to be in a special sense His own? Here the prophet made another great spiritual discovery. “Israel is indeed chosen by Jehovah, the infinite God,” he said in substance,



"but chosen for what? For special favors? For special protection against the sorrows and misfortunes which are the common lot of all?" "No," he answered, "but rather chosen for a special service for mankind; namely, to bring to all other nations the knowledge of this true God, Jehovah.) This thought comes out clearly in the "servant ideal," which he held up before his fellow-worshippers in the synagogues. The servant of Jehovah, he taught, is to bring not only Israel but the world to God.

"It is too little a thing to be my servant" (saith Jehovah).

"And to restore the survivors of Israel;

Therefore I will make thee the light of the nations,

That my Salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."

(Isa. 49: 6.)

In other passages, the author speaks of the entire nation as Jehovah's servant.

(Not only did the second Isaiah hold this ideal before the eyes of his countrymen as something to be realized in the future, but he also contended for it as a principle of everyday life. There were many foreigners living in Jerusalem at this time. Some of them would gladly have become worshippers of Jehovah, but many of the Jews were bitter in their hatred of all foreigners, and wished to exclude them from the temple worship. The second Isaiah, on the other hand, was eager to welcome them) and took their part in words like the following:

"Let not the foreigner who hath joined himself to Jehovah say, Jehovah will surely separate me from his people.

For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."

(Isa. 56: 1-8.)

#### OTHER PROPHETS WITH A WORLD-WIDE VISION

(In this broad and liberal attitude, the prophet unfortunately found few followers. During the next few centuries, the Jews as a people grew more and more narrow and prejudiced. Considering what they suffered, we can hardly blame them. Yet there were some who

learned from this great unknown prophet a better attitude toward other nations and races, and a nobler ideal for their own nation, Israel.) A short passage from one of these spiritual disciples of the second Isaiah is found in the second chapter of the book of Isaiah. (Isa. 2: 1-7.) It expresses the noble and inspiring hope that a time will come when the whole world will learn through Israel to worship Jehovah, and when as a result, all war shall be done away, and a universal reign of peace be ushered in.

“ And many peoples shall go and say,  
Come let us go up to Jehovah's mount,  
To the house of the God of Jacob,  
That he may instruct us in his ways  
And that we may walk in his paths.  
For from Zion proceeds instruction,  
And Jehovah's word from Jerusalem.

“ He will arbitrate between many peoples,  
And render decisions for numerous nations.  
They shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
And their spears into pruning-hooks.  
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
Neither shall they learn war any more.”

(Isa. 2: 1-4) (Micah 4: 1-3.)

An equally remarkable passage is found in the nineteenth chapter of Isaiah (19:18-25). The writer of these verses was perhaps a descendant of one of those Jewish exiles who had taken refuge in Egypt after 586 B.C. He had found good friends among the Egyptians. They had treated him kindly, in spite of the fact that he was a foreigner and a Jew. Thus he came to realize the foolishness and injustice of race prejudice. He rose to the noble thought that there were good men in all races, and that Jehovah had chosen for some special service in the world, not merely the Jews, but each and every race and nation. He believed that the Egyptians would some day become worshippers of Jehovah, and the Assyrians also. By the Assyrians he meant all

the inhabitants of the Tigris-Euphrates valley, which at that time was probably under the rule of Persia. He believed that in the good time to come, these great nations would no longer spend their energies in wasteful wars, but rather in building good roads, and in bringing manifold blessings to the world.

“In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria; and the Egyptians shall worship with the Assyrians.”

“In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth; for that Jehovah of hosts hath blessed them, saying, Blessed be Egypt, my people, and Assyria, the work of my hands, and Israel, mine inheritance.” (Isa. 19: 23-25.)

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Suppose the second Isaiah, and the other broad-minded writers described above were living in America today:

(a) How would they tell us to treat the immigrants?

(b) What would be their attitude toward foreign missions?

(c) What would be their attitude toward war?

2. How do you explain the fact that the same circumstances, namely, contact with foreigners, caused some Jews to grow more narrow and prejudiced, and others more sympathetic and broad minded?

3. Translate Isaiah 19:24 into modern terms, applying it to present-day conditions. Fill in the blanks in the following with three modern nations; or else write your own version.

In that day shall.....be the third with.....,  
and with....., a blessing in the midst of the earth.

4. From the prophetic writings discussed in this chapter, select your favorite passages. In addition to the quotations printed above, the following chapters are suggested: Isa. 40: 1-12. 42: 1-12. 55: 1-13.

## TO SUM UP

1. What was the usual belief of the Hebrews in early times, regarding the relation between their nation and Jehovah?

2. What was the more common attitude on the part of the Jews toward foreign nations, after 586 B.C.?

3. What prophets, during this period, wrote denunciations of foreign nations?

4. According to the second Isaiah, in what sense was Israel Jehovah's chosen people?

5. What did the second Isaiah teach regarding the question of admitting foreigners to the temple worship?

6. By whom, and on what occasion, centuries later, were his words on this subject quoted? (See Mark 11:17.)

7. Mention three great original discoveries of the second Isaiah.

8. "They shall beat their swords into plowshares." Where in the Bible is this sentence found?

9. Explain how it happens to be found in two different places.

10. How did the writer expect that this reign of peace would be brought about?

11. "In that day Egypt . . . . shall be a blessing in the midst of the earth." How did this passage come to be written?

# CHRONOLOGICAL CHART

Important Events	Poems and Historical Narratives	Laws	Prophetical Writings
1500 to 1400 B.C. } Nomadic			
1400 to 1300 B.C. } life.			
1300 to 1200 B.C. } Exodus from Egypt.			
1200 to 1100 B.C. } Philistine			
1100 to 1000 B.C. } wars.			
1000 to 900 B.C. } Organization of Kingdom.			
900 to 800 B.C. } Division of Kingdom.			
800 to 700 B.C. } Reign of Ahab.			
700 to 600 B.C. } Fall of Samaria.			
600 to 500 B.C. } Reign of Manasseh. Reform under Josiah.			
500 to 400 B.C. } Destruction of Jerusalem. Temple rebuilt.			
400 to 300 B.C. } Walls rebuilt by Nehemiah.			
300 to 200 B.C.			



## CHAPTER XXV

### PRAYERS FOR HELP IN TIME OF OPPRESSION

#### THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS AND THE EARLY PSALMS

One of the most essential parts of the equipment of a modern church is a supply of hymnals. We use them for various purposes. They contain the words and music for congregational singing; and most of them have at the end "responsive readings" and sometimes printed prayers. Some churches have a special prayer-book in addition to the hymn-book.

The Hebrews also had their hymn and prayer-books for use in their temple services, and other services of worship. Had we gone into one of these gatherings, however, we would by no means have found one of these books ready for use as in our church pews today. The art of printing was then unknown and hymnals and prayer-books could not be purchased by the hundred. It was necessary for those who wished to join in the worship to memorize the hymns and prayers. Probably the only copy in the room would be in the possession of the leader of the worship. He would read the service to the people every week, line by line, until it was thoroughly learned. To make this task of memorization easier, many of these hymns and prayers were written in acrostic form—that is, the successive lines or stanzas began with successive letters in the Hebrew alphabet.

#### THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS

Two of these ancient collections of hymns and prayers are preserved in the Old Testament; the largest and most familiar is the book of Psalms. There is another and

older collection, however, called the book of Lamentations. It consists of a series of five elegies, or dirges, lamenting the woes which befell Jerusalem when it was captured by Nebuchadrezzar and during the discouraging years that followed. The siege of a city in ancient times was horrible beyond expression, and that of Jerusalem by the Babylonians was no exception. In the pitiless famine of the last months,

“Little children and sucklings swooned in the streets.

They said to their mothers, Where is grain?” (Lam. 2: 11-12.)

When the end came with its blood and flame, the city was left a smoking ruin with only a handful of broken-hearted inhabitants.

The months passed and a new springtime came, bringing with it the anniversary of the capture of the city. The survivors could not but recall with fresh vividness the sufferings of those last weeks of the siege, and the final agony when nearly all that they held dear had been lost forever. On the day of the first anniversary it is probable that many of those who were left in Jerusalem gathered near the ruins of the temple, to offer sacrifices and to pray to Jehovah to have mercy on their land. Thereafter this anniversary and certain other days each year were observed as fast-days by many of the Jews.

For these fast-day services the five dirges which we have as the five chapters of the book of Lamentations were probably written. In our English Bible this book is headed, “The Lamentations of Jeremiah.” In the original Hebrew, however, there is nothing to indicate that Jeremiah wrote them. The author, or authors, certainly had in mind the needs of the public worship, for at least four of the poems are composed as acrostics, to aid the memory.

### THE PRAYERS OF DAVID

After the destruction of Jerusalem those who were especially poor and oppressed gathered in groups and not

only studied the law and the prophets, but also sang and prayed together. We can imagine the second Isaiah leading their worship. (See Chapter XXIII.) Of course they needed hymn and prayer books for their meetings. Early in the history of their movement these "servants of Jehovah" had a collection of hymns and prayers, called the Prayers of David. This does not mean that King David, who lived five centuries earlier, had written them, but rather that the collection as a whole was dedicated to that famous poet-king of Israel. Some of the hymns may have been written in the earlier days of the kingdom, but many more were added by the "servants of Jehovah" themselves. About one-half of the Old Testament book of Psalms is taken from this collection. These Psalms in our English versions are marked by the heading a "Psalm of David." The Hebrew means literally "to David"—that is, belonging to the David collection.

There was a remarkable variety of hymns and prayers in this great "David" collection. There were nature-songs, like Psalm 19, which expresses a deep appreciation of the glory of God as revealed in the sun and stars:

"The heavens declare the glory of God,  
And the firmament showeth his handiwork." (Psalm 19: 1.)

There were prayers of repentance, as Psalm 51:

"Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
And renew a right spirit within me.  
Cast me not away from thy presence  
And take not thy Holy Spirit from me." (Psalm 51: 10-11.)

Finally there were hymns of splendid moral aspiration, such as Psalms 15 and 24:

"Jehovah, who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle,  
Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?  
He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness  
And speaketh truth in his heart." (Psalm 15: 1.)

## PRAYERS FOR DELIVERANCE

The majority of these "David" Psalms reflect plainly the experiences of those days when these early worshippers were persecuted by the rich and arrogant nobles of Judah, and their supporters. There are frequent references to the enemies of Jehovah's true servants. The authors generally use the first person; but the words "I," "me" or "mine" usually stand for the whole group of the true followers of Jehovah, rather than for the individual speaker. Such passages as the following, therefore, are not merely vivid pictures of some one man's experience, but of the sufferings of these faithful men and women as a class:

"Whoever sees me derideth me;  
They sneer as they toss the head.  
'He depended upon Jehovah,' (they say) 'Let him deliver him,  
'Let him save him since he delighteth in him.' " (Psalm 22: 7-8.)

"Deliver me not over unto the will of my adversaries.  
For false witnesses are risen up against me,  
And such as breathe out cruelty." (Psalm 27: 12.)

In addition to such prayers for protection, which continue through page after page, many psalms of this group are jubilant in thanksgiving for past deliverances and full of trust for the future.

"Jehovah is my light and my salvation,  
Whom shall I fear?  
Jehovah is the strength of my life.  
Of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27: 1.)

## THE SHEPHERD PSALM

Perhaps the noblest product of these experiences of persecution is the twenty-third psalm. This exquisite little poem is so calm and peaceful with its green pastures and still waters, that one might be tempted to suppose that the author had never known troubles; that his life had always been as placid as the limpid pools of a meadow

stream on a summer day. But this would be a mistaken inference. Such a heartfelt appreciation of the peace and security and safe guidance which the divine Shepherd alone can give is the product only of many a time of hardship and danger and distress. Moreover, he speaks of "mine enemies," in the familiar phraseology of this period. The author was, perhaps, a Judean shepherd, living near Hebron, or Tekoa, or Bethlehem, and pasturing his little flock of sheep and goats on the hillside near the village. He was a leader of the "poor" who met in the village from week to week to pray, and to keep alive the ideals and the aspirations of the great prophets of their nation. The unjust oppressors who lived in that district determined to teach this brave man a lesson. He was harassed in all possible ways. He was threatened. He was kept in poverty and in debt and on the verge of slavery by constant extortion. He saw his wife and little ones hungry and cold. Robbers were permitted to attack him and plunder his small possessions with impunity, and he narrowly escaped death at their hands. Yet through all these years of anxiety and heart-break he clung to his faith in Jehovah, and to his surprise he discovered that in the very darkest hours there came to him a great reward which outweighed all the hardship. For it was in just these dark hours that the sweetest sense of God's presence and fellowship welled up in his heart like a song, and it dawned upon him that this great fellowship was a supreme prize which no outward mishap could take away. It was like a table spread before him in the very presence of his enemies. He was indeed under the care of a divine Shepherd who would never fail him.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.  
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." (Psalm 23: 4.)

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Explain the meaning of the postscript in Psalm 72: 20, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended."

2. Examine the following typical selections from the Prayers of David, and note their attitude toward unjust oppression: Psalms 12, 109, 23, 27.

(a) Which writers protest against oppression?

(b) Which are vindictive toward their oppressors?

(c) Which are able to rise above their resentment through trust in God?

3. Which of these attitudes do you approve, and which do you condemn?

4. What do you think of the appropriateness of the title, "The Prayers of David"? Do these poems represent the point of view of monarchs, or of the common people?

5. How can you account for the fact that a movement of revolt against oppression produced so much beautiful poetry; for example, such hymns as Psalms 8, 15, 19, 29, 51, 103?



6. What is your favorite of the Psalms mentioned in this chapter?

### TO SUM UP

1. What events stimulated the use of hymns and prayers in public worship among the Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem?

2. How did the worshippers learn the hymns and prayers so as to be able to repeat them together?

3. What two hymn and prayer-books are found in the Old Testament?

4. For what occasions were the poems in the book of Lamentations written?

5. In what gatherings were the "David" hymns and prayers first used?

6. Why are so many of them prayers for protection against enemies?

7. Who were these "enemies"?

8. Tell the story of the author of the twenty-third Psalm.

### NOTEBOOK WORK

Take two cheap or worn copies of the Bible and clip out and paste in your notebook five of these early Psalms that you enjoy most, giving to each, appropriate titles.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### HYMN-BOOKS WITHIN HYMN-BOOKS

#### THE STORY OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS

About seventy years after the rebuilding of the temple (516 B.C.) a committee of Jews from Jerusalem went to seek aid for their distressed country from their more prosperous kinsfolk who lived in Persia. They had particularly in mind a certain man named Nehemiah, who occupied an important position as cup-bearer and personal adviser to Artaxerxes, the king of Persia. When they found Nehemiah in the Persian capital, Susa, they told him how the city of his ancestors still lay for the most part in ruins, with no walls to protect its inhabitants and open to the attacks of all its enemies. Like most of the Jews who at this time were living in foreign lands, he had not realized that the fatherland had as yet recovered only in a slight degree from the crushing blow which had been struck by Nebuchadrezzar a century and a half before. Responding to the appeal of the committee with all the ardor of a noble soul, Nehemiah secured a leave of absence from the Persian king and permission to join with his countrymen in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. A few weeks later he arrived in Jerusalem, and within a few months in the face of extraordinary difficulties the great task was finished. The walls were restored and the city was safe. The committee had come to the right man.

In addition to the building of the walls, Nehemiah introduced important internal reforms. He restrained the powerful and unscrupulous nobles who had been in secret alliance with the external enemies and had been grinding into slavery the poor among their fellow-citizens. Nehe-

miah's achievements ushered in a new era of prosperity for Judah.

### PILGRIMAGES AND PILGRIM SONGS

One result was a new enthusiasm in the hearts of the people for the worship of God. The gatherings formerly known as "the poor" were still kept up, special buildings were erected for their use and came to be known as synagogues. There was also a new interest in the services of the temple. Worshipers came not only from Jerusalem but from all parts of Judah. According to the law in Deuteronomy all Jews were to come to Jerusalem three times a year to join in the great religious festivals such as the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Before Nehemiah's time these pilgrimages were unsafe, as the whole country was in disorder, and a crowd of pilgrims in Jerusalem would only have been the signal for robbers. But now the number of visitors increased each year.

These festivals were joyful occasions. People from the same village would come up together, and take lodgings together in Jerusalem. All the way thither the journey was enlivened by songs and jokes and laughter. During their stay in the city, when they were not "seeing the sights," the boys and girls would play together while their fathers and mothers gossiped. The culminating event of these festivals was of course the service of worship in the temple. Some, no doubt, entered into the spirit of the worship more deeply than others, but all were intensely proud of their beautiful city, with its newly built walls.

"Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth,  
Is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north,  
The city of the great King." (Psalm 48:2.)

Such occasions as these inevitably inspired songs. There is an exquisite group of songs in our book of Psalms, each of which bears the title, "A Song of the Pilgrimages."

(Psalms 120-134.) They are closely similar to each other in literary form and poetical spirit and probably most of them are by the same author. Very likely the pilgrims used to sing these songs on the moonlight nights on their journey toward Jerusalem and in the streets and squares of the city itself during the festivals. They reflect the delight of the author in all the innocent social joys of those days. We can almost hear the laughter of children at the family reunions.

“Lo, children are a heritage of Jehovah.”

“As arrows in the hand of a mighty man, so are the children of youth.

Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them.” (Psalm 127: 4-5.)

We can feel the patriotic longing with which every loyal Jew looked forward to these journeys and their pride in the splendid city which was the center of so much love.

“I am glad when they say to me,  
Let us go to the house of Jehovah;  
When our feet are standing  
Within thy gates, O Jerusalem.” (Psalm 122: 1-2.)

Perhaps the most noteworthy characteristic of these poems is the beautiful trust which the author feels in God's care. We look off with him from the city gate across the Kidron valley to the Mount of Olives on the east or to the hills on the south or west and we hear him say:

“They that trust in Jehovah,  
Are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth forever.

“As the mountains are round about Jerusalem,  
So Jehovah is round about his people.  
From this time forth and forevermore.” (Psalm 125: 1-2.)

## CHURCH CHOIRS AND THEIR ANTHEMS

This new interest in the temple worship led to a great improvement in the services. Instrumental music on harps and flutes was provided to accompany the hymns. A regular temple choir was established and was given the entire control of the services of prayer and singing. Different families or guilds were appointed from time to time as choir leaders, as, for example, the "sons of Korah," and the "sons of Asaph."

These choir leaders were continually on the watch for new hymns in order to give variety to the services. No doubt they used the "Prayers of David" and perhaps also the "Songs of the Pilgrimages." They also made new collections of their own. There was a collection by the sons of Korah, from which Psalms 42-49 and 84-87 in our Old Testament are taken, and another collection by the sons of Asaph. (Psalms 50 and 73-83.)

The Psalms of the sons of Korah are especially noteworthy and include some of the most beautiful in the Old Testament. They express an intense devotion to the services of worship in the temple as the place where men may find new strength for the burdens and duties of life. Unlike some modern church choirs, these sons of Korah were evidently not merely good musicians, but also were filled with a deep and genuine love for God.

"How amiable are thy tabernacles

O Jehovah of hosts!

My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of Jehovah.

My heart and my flesh cry out unto the living God.

Yea, the sparrow hath found her a house,

And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young,

Even thine altars, O Jehovah of hosts,

My King and my God." (Psalm 84.)

Like the Songs of the Pilgrimages, these songs of the sons of Korah are aglow with gratitude to God for the new peace and prosperity which he has sent upon their beloved land. (See Psalm 85.)

## A COMMITTEE ON A NEW HYMN-BOOK

Each of these collections of hymns had its admirers just as today some people are fond of the Moody and Sankey "Gospel Hymns," while others prefer the old Church Hymns. Each synagogue had its own preference. In those days this state of things was inconvenient. Visitors at a synagogue service were frequently unable to join in the hymns because in their own home synagogue they had used and memorized a different collection. They felt as we feel today when we visit a strange church and cannot find a hymn-book in the pew. At the time of the great religious festivals in the temple there were very few hymns in which everybody could join, so it is possible that a regular committee was appointed by the temple authorities to prepare a new hymn-book.

These men included in their new book the best of all the preceding collections and they added a considerable number of other hymns and prayers which they found in circulation. Among these were the well-known:

"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations."  
(Psalm 90.)

and

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High,  
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psalm 91.)

Among the best of the new hymns was a long one, which in our Old Testament is divided into a number of short Psalms. (Psalms 95-100). The most familiar of these is Psalm 100, beginning

"Make a joyful noise unto Jehovah, all ye lands."

All these hymns, from all these various sources, were copied into a new and much larger hymn and prayer-book, which was divided into five sections. This book came into universal use among all Jews, and is preserved to us as our Old Testament book of Psalms. The spirit in which this committee worked is indicated by the hymn



which they placed at the beginning of their new book, as a kind of introductory meditation:

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the  
ungodly,  
Nor standeth in the way of sinners,  
Nor sitteth in the seat of the scoffers.  
But his delight is in the law of Jehovah,  
And on his law doth he meditate day and night.  
And he shall be like a tree, planted by the streams of water,  
That bringeth forth its fruit in due season,  
Whose leaf also doth not wither;  
And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” (Psalm 1: 1-3.)

These great poems have been on the lips of more men and women throughout the centuries than any other words ever written, except the sayings of Jesus. “They have furnished the bridal hymns, the battle songs, the pilgrim marches, the penitential prayers, and the public praises of every nation in Christendom since Christendom was born.” The book of Psalms has been called “the mirror of the soul,” because there is no noble emotion, no depth of longing which does not find expression in it. Hence it is that as St. Augustine said, “the Psalms are read in all the world, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.”

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Compare Psalms 14 and 53; what fact do you observe, and how do you account for it?
2. If we had to memorize our hymns, as the Jews did, in order to sing them together, how would this affect our church services?
3. How should we be benefited by going to church?
4. How may we give as well as get in a church service?
5. What is your favorite Psalm of those mentioned in this chapter?

## TO SUM UP

1. How did "the Lord restore the prosperity of Zion"?
2. In addition to the rebuilding of the walls, what reforms did Nehemiah carry out?
3. What was the effect of these events on the temple worship?
4. Why did pilgrimages to Jerusalem now become a prominent part of Jewish life?
5. Why did everybody enjoy these pilgrimages?
6. What was the title of the collection of songs, from which Psalms 120-134 were taken?
7. Tell the probable story of the experiences which led to the writing of these songs.

8. Mention two of these sentiments which are most frequently expressed in these Pilgrim songs.

9. Who were the "sons of Korah"?

10. Explain how these various earlier prayer and hymn-books were finally combined in our book of Psalms.

### NOTEBOOK WORK

Take two cheap or worn copies of the Bible and clip out all the Psalms of the sons of Korah, putting them together in the notebook with a suitable heading.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### APPEALING TO HISTORY IN A CHURCH QUARREL

#### I AND II CHRONICLES, EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

"The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans," says the Gospel of John (John 4: 9), in its account of the conversation between Jesus and the woman of Samaria. When did this bitter feud begin? For the earliest beginnings we must go back to the settlement in Canaan, when the tribe of Judah and certain minor clans settled in the south, and the other tribes settled in the north. The two sections of the nation were kept apart for many years by a strip of Canaanite territory. Under Saul, David and Solomon they were drawn together into a united kingdom; but after Solomon's death the northern tribes revolted and set up a kingdom of their own, of which the city of Samaria soon became the capital.

Then came the hostile armies of Assyria and Babylonia and first Samaria (722 B.C.) and then Jerusalem (586 B.C.) were besieged, captured, and in large part destroyed. This common misfortune drew the two sections together for a time. When the temple at Jerusalem was rebuilt the Samaritans came there to worship. As the ceremonial law was gradually developed by the Jerusalem priests into the form now found in the Pentateuch (see Chapter XVI), the Samaritans accepted it without question and tried to obey it.

Previous to Nehemiah's visit Samaria seems to have become the political and commercial center of the land, and was perhaps the headquarters of the tyrannical nobles who oppressed the poorer people. They and their allies among the Ammonites, Edomites, Moabites and also

among the nobles of the Jews themselves, were therefore bitterly opposed to the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. The Samaritan governor, whose name was Sanballat, was the leader in the opposition against Nehemiah. Thus the old jealousy was revived. About a century after Nehemiah, or just before Alexander the Great conquered the Persian empire, there was another quarrel between the two sections of Palestine which led to a religious separation.

### THE SAMARITAN TEMPLE

The Samaritan woman said to Jesus, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain [that is, Mount Gerizim, near Samaria] but ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship" (John 4:20). This was the bone of contention between the Jews and the Samaritans, and it came about as follows:

A certain prominent priest, named Manasseh, married Nicaso, the daughter of Sanballat, governor of Samaria. This was perhaps the grandson of the Sanballat who opposed Nehemiah. At once there was a protest in Jerusalem. Many demanded that Manasseh either divorce his wife or else resign his office. They would not have a son-in-law of a Sanballat occupying a prominent position in their temple. Sanballat accordingly said to Manasseh, "What do we care for those people! Have we not a sacred mountain in Samaria, whose traditions are far older than Jerusalem? Come, I will build a new temple for you on Mount Gerizim. You shall be high priest. Some of your fellow-priests will leave Jerusalem and come with you. We also have priestly families here in Samaria. The result will be that most of the people, not only of Samaria but of Judah also will come and worship at our temple and that will leave the Jerusalem temple without worshippers and without any support."

### THE CLAIMS OF THE OPPOSING PARTIES

Thus it came about that there were two rival temples and that their respective adherents hated each other.

In every village gate where Jews and Samaritans came in contact the debate was carried on with hot words and angry gestures. The Jews, of course, appealed to the law of Deuteronomy, which forbade sacrifices outside of Jerusalem. Unfortunately for them that law-book nowhere explicitly mentioned Jerusalem by name. It had been written as though by Moses before the settlement in Canaan, and hence instead of saying "Jerusalem," the writers had said, "the place which Jehovah shall choose." (See Deut. 12:5.) The Samaritans now declared: "That means Mount Gerizim, not Jerusalem. Instead of our going to Jerusalem, you should come to Mount Gerizim to sacrifice." Of course this greatly incensed the Jerusalemites. They retorted by saying that the priests at the Samaritan temple were not pure-blooded members of the tribe of Levi; that in fact they were not even pure-blooded Israelites. They asserted: "When the Assyrians conquered Samaria they brought in thousands of heathen colonists; in fact, you Samaritans are little better than heathen." (See II Kings 17:24-41, which was probably added to II Kings at this time.) But the Samaritans were able to answer that their claims to a pure Hebrew ancestry were at least as good as those of the Jews. Did not the book of Kings clearly say that when Nebuchadrezzar conquered Jerusalem he carried to Babylon all but the very poorest and the meanest of the people? (See II Kings 25:12.) And it was well known that these people who had been left in the land had freely intermarried with foreigners.

So the quarrel went on with all its unfortunate consequences. It inevitably strengthened the tendency to regard religion as a mere matter of priestly ceremonies. It also increased the narrowness and prejudice of the Jews in their attitude toward foreigners. The mechanical, lifeless religion of the scribes in Jesus' time may have been in no small measure the product of this church quarrel.



## THE CHRONICLER

Both the Jews and the Samaritans appealed to history to prove that their temple alone was properly authorized by Jehovah. Unfortunately for the contestants the history as it stood did not seem to favor one side more than another. Hence at least one other history was written which was not so impartial.

About seventy-five or a hundred years after the building of the Samaritan temple there lived in Jerusalem a certain Levite who was called "the Chronicler," because he wrote the Old Testament books I and II Chronicles. He seems to have been a member of the temple choir, perhaps one of the "sons of Asaph." Of course he was a supporter of the Jerusalem temple as against the Samaritans, and it vexed him that his fellow-Jews were so often beaten in argument. "I will write a history," said our friend, "out of which no Samaritan can get comfort and which will forever settle this question in favor of the Jews." So he wrote a history which, in our Bibles, is divided into four books, I and II Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah. The first two of these books carry the narrative down to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar (586 B.C.). The remaining two, Ezra and Nehemiah, give the writer's ideas regarding the restoration of prosperity to the land during the succeeding centuries.

The history reveals the author's purpose on almost every page. There are many long genealogies extending from Adam down to the Chronicler's own time to show that the Jews, rather than the Samaritans, were of pure Hebrew blood. David and Solomon, who founded the Jerusalem temple, are painted as saints. Nothing is said about their faults. The northern kingdom, on the other hand, is put in a bad light.

In the latter part of the history (our books of Ezra and Nehemiah) the Chronicler was chiefly interested to show that the temple at Jerusalem had been rebuilt, not by the people who had been left in the land (who had married

foreigners), but by returned exiles from Babylon who were supposed to have been pure-blooded Israelites.

According to the Chronicler's representation of the matter the testimony of history was all on the side of the Jews. Clearly we should not regard such a history as altogether reliable. Not that the Chronicler deliberately falsified the history, but he lived in a biased atmosphere. Nevertheless, his writings are of value. They throw a flood of light on the history of his own time. Moreover, he was sincerely and enthusiastically devoted to the worship of Jehovah.

### THE MEMOIRS OF NEHEMIAH

The Chronicler copied much of his material from older sources of information. Large parts of I and II Chronicles are taken word for word from the books of Samuel and Kings. Of the book of Nehemiah also a considerable section (chapters 1-2 and 4-6) were taken from a book of memoirs written by Nehemiah himself, telling of his experiences in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. The literary style of these chapters is very different from that of the Chronicler. They express the energetic, unselfish spirit of Nehemiah and give us a vivid picture of his heroic struggles on behalf of his city. They must be reckoned among the best historical records that have come down to us from antiquity.

The following is a good example of Nehemiah's clear, vigorous style:

"When our enemies heard that their plan was known to us, and that God had brought it to nought, we all of us returned to the wall each to his own work. And from that time on, while half of my servants were engaged in the work, half of them held the lances, the shields, the bows and the coats of mail. . . . Those who built the wall and those who bore burdens were also armed, each with one of his hands engaged in the work, while the other was ready to grasp the spear; and each of the builders had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he who sounded the trumpet was by me. And I said to

the nobles and the rulers, and to the rest of the people, 'The work is great and extensive, and we are separated upon the wall far from each other. In whatever place you hear the sound of the trumpet, gather to us, our God will fight for us.' So we were active in the work, while half of them held the lances, from the gray of morning until the stars came out." (Neh. 4: 15-21.)

The Chronicler was probably chiefly interested in these memoirs because they told of Nehemiah's successful opposition to the Samaritan governor, Sanballat. They are of surpassing interest to us today because they are almost our only source of information regarding one of the noblest leaders in Hebrew history: a man of humble faith, a loyal patriot, a champion of the weak and in all things a knightly gentleman.

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Imagine a Samaritan writer composing a history covering the same period as the Chronicler. Mention some points at which he would have differed from the Chronicler.

2. Suppose the Chronicler had been seeking to reconcile the Samaritans, what steps might he have taken?

3. Do you think that Nehemiah's work at Jerusalem helped to stir up more bitterness between the Jews and Samaritans, or was it in the interest of peace?

4. In what ways was this quarrel between the Jews and the Samaritans similar in its effects to the sectarian controversies between churches today?

5. What are some steps which are being taken today to bring about Christian unity and international peace?

## TO SUM UP

1. What was the chief dispute between the Jews and the Samaritans in the time of Jesus?

2. How did it happen that the Samaritans built a temple on Mount Gerizim?

3. Why had these two sections of the people been hostile to each other, long before the outbreak of this quarrel over two rival temples?

4. What were some of the arguments of the Samaritans against the temple at Jerusalem?

5. What were some of the arguments of the Jews against the temple on Mount Gerizim?

6. What facts can we infer about "the Chronicler"?

7. What was one of his chief purposes in writing his history?

8. What Old Testament books were written by him?

9. How did he modify the history as told in the books of Kings?

10. How did he attempt to refute the Samaritan charge that the Jerusalem priests were descended from foreigners who had intermarried with Jews after the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar?

11. From what trustworthy record did the Chronicler copy his account of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem?

12. Where is this part of his narrative to be found?

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### TWO KINDS OF PATRIOTISM

#### THE STORIES OF ESTHER AND JONAH

Among the later writings of the Old Testament are two stories which breathe a typically Jewish spirit of intense patriotism. They represent, however, very different kinds of patriotism, and different ideas regarding the true place of Israel among the nations.

We will look first at the book of Esther. The heroine of this story, after whom the book is named, was a beautiful Jewess, living in Persia among the Jewish exiles, in the home of her uncle Mordecai. By a strange turn of fortune, this maiden, Esther, became the queen-consort of Ahasuerus, the Persian king. Now at that time the king had a wicked prime minister named Haman, who in his arrogance required all common men to do obeisance before him whenever they were in his presence. There was one man, however, among the king's subjects, who refused to do homage before him, and that was Mordecai, the Jew, Esther's uncle. Haman was greatly enraged, and secured from the weak and cruel despot Ahasuerus, an infamous decree to put to death on a certain day, not only Mordecai, but all the Jews in all the empire of Persia. Of course, neither the king nor Haman were aware that Esther was related to Mordecai, or even that she was a Jewess. Haman further planned a special vengeance on Mordecai, and erected a special scaffold about ninety feet high on which to hang him.

In the meantime, however, Mordecai had told Esther of the dastardly plot against their people, and urged her to intercede with the king. "Who knowest," he said,



"but that thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this." Esther replied that to go into the king's presence uninvited might mean death; nevertheless she promised to take the risk, and "if I perish, I perish." Her adventure proved a success.

Through her skill and tact she won the king over to her side and against Haman. The latter was hanged on the very scaffold he had built for Mordecai, and Mordecai was made prime minister in his place. As for the Jews they were given permission to defend themselves and kill their enemies. So when the day came on which they were to be massacred, they were the slayers and not the slain.

The germ of this story was probably derived originally from the Babylonians, who told it at their New Year's celebration. In its Babylonian form, it was a story about the gods Marduk and Ishtar. The Jews during their exile in Babylonia adopted the Babylonian New Year's feast, calling it the feast of Purim. They also continued to tell the old Babylonian story, only changing the god Marduk and the goddess Ishtar into human beings Mordecai and Esther.

In its present form, however, the story is not a mere popular tale but a fascinating patriotic romance, told with a purpose, by a man of remarkable literary talent. He lived in a time when the Jews were suffering an unusual degree of persecution from the Greek authorities. This aroused in him, in turn, a passionate hatred for the enemies of his people. There is much in the story, as he tells it, which falls below our Christian ideals. It is not pleasant to read his account of how many thousands were slain by the Jews. On the other hand, we can condone such feelings to some extent, when we consider the cruel tyranny which provoked them. The unselfish courage of Esther is nobly portrayed and there is something manly too in Mordecai's steadfast refusal to be a servile, fawning courtier before Haman. We may imagine

that the author of our story was very much such a man as Mordecai.

### THE BOOK OF JONAH

The author of the story of Jonah was a prophet. He had remarkable gifts as a teacher and preacher. Like the author of Esther, he had travelled in foreign lands. It is probable that he had lived in Egypt. There was a large colony of Jews at that time in Alexandria, the new capital of Egypt which had been built by Alexander the Great and named for himself. At any rate, this man had come into contact with foreigners. He had seen their vices and sins. He knew their selfishness, deceitfulness, and injustice. But he was a believer in the teachings of the second Isaiah and instead of holding aloof from these people he made friends with them and told them in their own language about the religion of the one God, Jehovah, and about his holy and righteous laws. Most of his fellow Jews, however, criticized him sharply for these things. "Why do you associate with these Gentile dogs?" they said to him. "Do you not know their vile and wicked deeds? Have they not persecuted the people of Israel? Has not Jehovah pronounced the sentence of death upon them all, through the prophet Ezekiel?" (See Ezek. 38-39.) To this he would answer, "Yes, I know their evil deeds; but perchance they will repent, if we tell them of Jehovah and His commands. Then it will not be necessary for Him to destroy them." This brought forth a reply which deeply shocked our prophet. "*We do not want them to repent. We do not want Jehovah to forgive them.*" It was this attitude of his fellow Jews which led him to write the story of the prophet Jonah.

### THE STORY OF JONAH, AND ITS MESSAGE

The word of Jehovah, he says, came to the prophet Jonah, bidding him to go to the city Nineveh, and preach to the people there. But Jonah disobeyed Jehovah.

Going down to Joppa on the coast of Palestine, he took passage in a ship which was setting sail for Tarshish, an ancient Phœnician colony in Spain. In other words, instead of going to Nineveh, he was trying to go as far in the opposite direction as possible. But Jehovah sent a storm upon the sea, and the ship was in danger of being destroyed. The sailors were therefore obliged to throw Jonah overboard, as being the cause of the storm.

Now Jehovah had prepared a great fish, so the story goes, which swallowed Jonah, and after three days threw him out again on the shore. Thus Jonah had another chance to obey Jehovah's command, and this time he went to Nineveh, and cried in the streets of the city: "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed." The result was a great revival in the city of Nineveh. The people there, both small and great, repented of their wicked deeds, and besought God's mercy. The king himself joined in, and "put on sackcloth" and proclaimed a fast. So when Jehovah saw that the Ninevites had truly and sincerely repented, he forgave them, and did not destroy the city. But strange to say, this displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. "Then Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city."

While Jonah was thus sulking in his booth, or hut, like a spoiled child, Jehovah caused a certain plant called a kikayon, or castor-oil tree, to grow up near by. In our English version it is called a gourd. And Jonah became fond of the graceful plant with its welcome shade. It seemed like a friend to him in his bitterness. But on another day Jehovah sent a worm to gnaw at the roots of the plant and it withered away. And now Jonah was even more angry at Jehovah than before. Then God said to Jonah, in substance, You were fond of the gourd, which was but a wild plant, growing up and perishing in a day, and you were sorry to see it die.

Can it be that you are willing without a moment's hesitation to condemn to destruction this great city of Nineveh? You had bestowed no care or labor on this plant; yet you felt an affection for it. Do not forget that I created these people of Nineveh; and should I not love them? And remember, also, that in this great city there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand little children, besides many dumb beasts. Can they be expected to know the difference between right and wrong that I should pour out fire and brimstone upon them and destroy them?

Through this great and beautiful story the author wished to teach his fellow Jews that all men are by nature God's children, whatever their race or nationality; that Israel is not to hold aloof from other races, still less to hate them; but to share with them her knowledge of the true God, and to feel towards them something of the same love and compassion which God feels toward all his children.

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Imagine the author of Esther as an American living in California: How would he feel toward the Japanese? Would you approve?
2. Imagine the author of Esther as a negro: How would he feel regarding his own race? Would you approve?
3. In what respect does the book of Jonah show a nobler spirit than Esther, in its attitude toward foreigners?
4. What would the author of the book of Jonah think today regarding foreign missions? Regarding our treatment of immigrants?
5. Which story do you like best, simply as a story?

## TO SUM UP

1. At about what date was the book of Esther written?
2. What experience had the author had with foreigners, and what was his attitude toward them?
3. What was the connection between the story of Esther and the Feast of Purim?
4. Give in a few words an outline of the story.
5. What facts may we reasonably infer regarding the early life and experiences of the author of the book of Jonah?
6. Give a brief outline of the story.
7. What lessons does it teach?

## CHAPTER XXIX

### HEBREW LOVE SONGS AND A HEBREW LOVE STORY

#### THE SONG OF SONGS AND THE BOOK OF RUTH

What strikes us as strangest in the marriage customs of the Old Testament is the fact that marriages were supposed to be arranged entirely by the parents of the bride and groom. It would seem that there could not have been much of what we call courtship or wooing. Often the two persons to be married never saw each other prior to the wedding. This seems to us most unnatural. What if the young man did not care for the girl his parents had selected for him? What if the girl were to find herself yoked up for life with an ugly tempered, domineering tyrant, old enough to be her father? As time went on, many young people rebelled against these customs. This was especially the case after the Jews began to come in closer contact with the Persians and the Greeks. Human nature is much the same in every age. Hebrew lads and lassies fell in love with each other, just as our lads and lassies do; nor did their love always follow the lines marked out by their parents. Father and mother may say: "Daughter, we have arranged for your betrothal. You are to be married to our old neighbor Bildad." But daughter is strangely lacking in gratitude and entirely lacking in enthusiasm for Bildad. In fact she is decidedly rebellious. An angry tear steals into her eye. Before the betrothal takes place there is a scene in the family council. "I will not marry that old man," says daughter, and stamps her foot. To her mother she says: "Father should be ashamed. Why is he so cruel?" "Very



well," says father; "if this daughter of folly will not marry our neighbor, she shall not marry at all. Mother, let not that idle scapegrace of an Isaac come any more to this house."

After such quarrels, father and mother would sigh for the "good old days," when sons and daughters did as they were told and asked no questions.

### THE SONG OF SONGS

There is one book in the Old Testament which seems to prove conclusively that human nature was the same in ancient Palestine as now. Love and passion were just as powerful and romance was just as sweet. Even though the customs were unfavorable, Hebrew youths knew how to woo, and Hebrew maids knew how to give their hearts. This book is the Song of Songs. The author probably lived between 300 and 200 B.C. The book does not profess to be religious. It was included in the Old Testament only because of the tradition that Solomon wrote it. It is really a collection of love and marriage songs. Some of these poems, perhaps all of them, were intended to be sung at weddings. In Syria, today, there are usually several days of feasting after a wedding, during which time the groom is called the king, and the bride the queen. There are songs and dances in their honor. This perhaps explains the references to "Solomon," and "the Shulamite," in the Song of Songs. "Solomon" was the groom, and the "Shulamite" was the bride.

The meaning and beauty of these love-lyrics is partially obscured because they are joined together as though they were a single poem. There is nothing to indicate where one poem ends and another begins. They may be disentangled to some extent, however, by studying the changes in theme and setting. For example, here is a quotation from one of the most beautiful, which may be entitled

## LOVE IN SPRINGTIME

" My lover spoke, and said to me,  
Arise, my sweet-heart, my beauty, and come away  
For lo, the winter is past;  
The rain is over and gone;  
The flowers appear on the earth;  
And the time of the singing is come,  
And the turtledove's voice is heard in our land.

" The fig tree ripens her figs,  
And the vines are in blossom;  
They give forth their fragrance.  
Arise, my sweetheart, my beauty, and come away."  
(Song of Songs 2: 8-13.)

If used at wedding festivities, the above song would naturally be sung by the bride. The book as a whole seems to contain other songs for the groom and the wedding attendants. Some of these songs are among the most beautiful love poems of all literature.

## THE BOOK OF RUTH

The author of the story of Ruth probably lived in an earlier age than the poet who wrote the Song of Songs. Even in his time the "good old days" were already past. Love and custom were frequently in sharp conflict. This man was one of the truest and noblest souls in all the history of Israel. He had a wonderful insight into the secrets of the human heart and the deepest needs of human life. He knew perfectly well that young lives crave love, and that love resents the cold restraints of prudence and tradition. He knew that love is of infinitely greater worth than material prosperity. On the other hand, he had lived long enough to realize that people are sometimes led into sad mistakes by following a temporary infatuation. He also realized that more is at stake in a marriage than the individual happiness of two persons. The weal or woe of the whole community is involved. He was a

great believer, therefore, in family loyalty and wished young people to be guided by this motive more than by their self-centered impulses, in the selection of a wife or husband.

With these convictions in his heart, he came upon the tradition of Ruth. It had been cherished for centuries in Bethlehem, the birthplace of David, as an interesting chapter in that great man's family history. Out of that tradition this writer created a story which is immortal. The substance of it is as follows:

On account of a famine in Judah, a certain Bethlehemite named Elimelech was compelled to migrate to the land of Moab, with his wife Naomi, and his two sons. Thus it came about that these two sons married Moabitish women, named Orpah and Ruth. Soon, however, a new trouble befell the family, for Elimelech died, and his sons also.

For a time the three women lived together in their common sorrow, but soon it seemed best for Naomi to return to Bethlehem where she owned a little property. So the three set out together on the long walk of more than thirty miles around the northern end of the Dead Sea. Before they had gone far, Naomi besought the two girls to return to their own people. She explained to them that by so doing they would have a better chance to get for themselves desirable husbands. And Orpah did finally bid her mother-in-law farewell. Ruth, however, would not go back. She felt herself bound to Naomi by too many sacred memories. "Entreat me not to leave thee," she said, "and to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God; where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried. Jehovah do so to me and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." So the author goes on to tell how the two women came to Bethlehem; how they were in great poverty; and

how Ruth, to obtain food for the two of them, went out to glean behind the reapers in the barley-harvest.

Now it happened that the fair young gleaner came to the field of a certain man named Boaz, a wealthy relative of Naomi through her former husband Elimelech. About noon, Boaz himself came out from the village to the yellow barley field to see how the work was going. As he talked with the foreman of the reapers he noticed the young woman standing with his own harvest girls and gathering the scattered handfuls of grain. "Whose maiden is this?" said Boaz. "It is Ruth the Moabitess," the man replied, "who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab." Now Boaz had already heard from the neighbors about Ruth's splendid fidelity to her mother-in-law and as he saw her grace and beauty, his heart was drawn to her. So in a few moments, Ruth looked up and saw him standing near her, tall and handsome, and with eyes full of kindness. "Do not go to glean in another field, my daughter," he said, "but stay here by my maidens." Then he added: "It hath been fully showed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law, since the death of thy husband. Jehovah recompense thee, and a full reward be given thee of Jehovah the God of Israel under whose wings thou art come to take refuge."

Soon after that it was dinner time and a table was set for the young men and maidens in a shady corner of the field. Boaz sat down with the others in the good old simple manner, and he beckoned Ruth to sit beside him in the merry company. He saw to it that she had all that she needed, and more beside, to take home to her mother.

That night when she went home and told Naomi of her experiences, she was full of talk about the kind gentleman with the handsome bronzed face. She now learned that this man was a near kinsman of the family. According to the law of those days when a man died childless it was the duty of the nearest kinsman to marry

the widow. The children would bear the first husband's name. Now there was living in Bethlehem a man who was even more closely related than Boaz to the family of Naomi. But that good lady, shrewd and kind old matchmaker that she was, soon laid her plans. Ruth was to marry Boaz. They were in love with each other, that was plain. In such cases, according to the Hebrew custom, it was proper to send Ruth to make the first advances. So the girl, following Naomi's instructions, went trembling on her sweet errand. And Boaz said to her: "Blessed be thou of Jehovah, my daughter, thou hast shown more kindness in this last instance than at the beginning, since thou hast not gone after young men, whether poor or rich." Boaz meant that she might have been expected to prefer a younger man than he; but that by following the old custom, and choosing a near relative of her first husband, she had shown a beautiful loyalty to her family, just as when she had come with Naomi all the way from Moab.

So Ruth and Boaz were married. It was in accordance with the accepted customs, yet it was a love-match too. And from this ideal marriage came a son, who in turn became the grandfather of David. Follow the path of duty — this is the author's message. Be unselfishly loyal to those family ties which are already upon you; and you may be sure that love and romance and happiness will all come to you in their own good time.



## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. If you were to set the Song of Songs to music, what kind of a melody would you choose? Mention an example, if you can, from modern tunes.

2. Suppose you were arranging the story of Ruth as a play: Could you have one of the characters sing the poem "Love in Springtime," from the Song of Songs? If so, at what point, and from the lips of what character, would it be most appropriate?

3. What was it that chiefly attracted the love of Boaz for Ruth?

4. Judging from the story of Ruth, what is the surest pathway to a happy marriage?

5. What do you think would be the answer of the author of the story of Ruth to the following questions:

(a) Is it ever right for two people who do not love each other to be married?

(b) Is "We love each other" always a sufficient reason for saying, "We ought to be married"?

## TO SUM UP

1. At about what date was the Song of Songs written?

2. How may the different songs which make up the book be distinguished from each other?

3. To what class of poems do all of these songs belong?



4. How did the marriage customs of the ancient Hebrews frequently come into conflict with the natural impulses of young people?

5. Tell, briefly, the story of Ruth the Moabitess.

6. What was the purpose of the writer in telling this story?

7. In what respect was the marriage of Ruth and Boaz an ideal one?

## CHAPTER XXX

### WISE MEN WHO TAUGHT IN THE GATE

#### THE STORY OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

It seems strange to us to speak of a "city gate" as a place in which to teach. The difficulty is explained by the fact that the Hebrews applied the word "gate" to the broad area in front of the actual opening in the city wall. The "city gate" corresponds, therefore, to the public square in a modern town.

Suppose we visit one of these "gates" in imagination. It is early morning. Everything is noise and confusion. Here are merchants peddling their wares: wheat, dates, honey, wine and other things to eat or drink; or perchance wool and flax and other materials for the manufacture of clothing. Customers, men and women, are haggling with the traders in true Oriental style; each one is proclaiming in a loud, shrill voice and with many gestures that the price he is asked to pay or take is a robbery and an outrage. Besides the merchants, there are judges. Here sits one of the city elders with a long white beard. Before him are two farmers who are disputing about the boundary line between their fields. Each has brought his witnesses. There is a fringe of curious spectators looking on.

In fact everything is happening here which may be expected to happen when a crowd of people get together. Out in the middle of the area some children are playing a noisy game, perhaps something like our "duck on the rock." Every now and then a mangy yellow dog noses his way through the crowd looking for scraps of food. On the whole, it is not what we would call an attractive place. The ground is littered with all kinds of dirt.

Our nose is assaulted by a variety of odors. But the ancients did not seem to object to these things as much as we do. At any rate they loved to be where they could see their neighbors and hear the news.

### THE WISE MAN

In one corner of the city gate, we notice a dignified figure; an old man with a circle of friends. He is watching the varied scenes before him and occasionally talking with those about him. "Who is that old man?" we ask. "That is one of the wise men," we are told. These wise men in ancient Israel were students, and artists, and teachers. As students their business was to study human life. They loved to "sit in the gate" and watch the merchants, and the judges, and the boys and girls. As artists they sought to describe what they saw in proverbs; that is, in short sentences, pithy and unforgettable. This was a form of literary art much admired by all Oriental nations and not altogether neglected even among us today. Benjamin Franklin's "Poor Richard's Almanac" is our best-known example.

As teachers, the mission of the wise men was to give to younger and less experienced people the benefit of their practical good sense, and their tried and tested conclusions. A large number of their sayings are preserved in certain Old Testament books, especially the book of Proverbs.

Let us sit for a little while beside the wise man in this city gate and look at the human kaleidoscope through his eyes. We shall be surprised to see how interesting it is.

Here, for example, comes young Mr. Know-it-all. He wears stylish clothes, and throws out his chest, and walks with a swagger. His father and mother and all his aunts and uncles have always told him that he was the most clever person in the world; and of course he agrees with them. He will listen to no advice. In fact he is offended if any one ventures to offer it.

"Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit?" says our friend.  
"There is more hope for a fool than for him." (Prov. 26:12.)

We also see that the wise man has a keen sense of humor. He loves to smile at the little foibles of human nature. For example, he has been listening to one of those shouting, wrangling groups of traders and bargain-hunters, and this is his dry comment:

"Bad, bad, says the buyer,  
But when he is gone his way, then he boasts." (Prov. 20:14.)

The wise man is also much amused at the great reputation some people acquire, just by keeping still and looking wise:

"Even a fool, if he holds his peace, is considered wise.  
When he keeps his mouth shut, he is called prudent." (Prov. 17:28.)

But though he is so keen to puncture conceit with his wit, and so ready to laugh men out of their petty follies, we find nevertheless that the wise man has a tender heart. He sympathizes with the mother who has waited so long for news from her boy, who went away from home. He knows that

"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." (Prov. 13:12.)

And he is almost as happy as she is when a letter comes from him at last:

"As cold water to a thirsty soul,  
So is good news from a far country." (Prov. 25:25.)

He has a ready sympathy for those who are anxious and troubled and discouraged:

"The spirit of a man will endure misfortune.  
But a broken spirit who can bear?" (Prov. 18:17.)

Best of all he knows the value of friendly encouragement:

"Care in the heart of a man, maketh it stoop.  
But a kind word maketh it glad." (Prov. 12:25.)

He himself has spoken many such kind words to those who are broken in spirit and has given them new heart for the battle of life.

### THE WISE MAN AS A TEACHER

With this keen insight into human nature, it was natural that many should come to the wise man for advice. There were tricksters in those days, just as now, and there were "greenhorns" to be cheated. One favorite method of separating simpletons from their money was to persuade them to act as surety for a loan. "Just shake hands with me before witnesses," the smooth-tongued stranger would say, "and I will guarantee not only to repay the money, but to make us both rich beside. A friend of mine is coming with a caravan of wonderful silks from Damascus, which he will sell me for a mere song. All I need is a hundred shekels, and I can sell the silks for a thousand." So the poor fool would shake hands with the stranger, which corresponded to our modern custom of putting one's name on a note; and the man would immediately take the money and disappear, leaving his victim to repay the loan. "Be on your guard against these sharpers," the wise men were constantly saying. (See Prov. 22: 26-27.)

In addition to this practical shrewdness in money-matters, the wise men were often able to set the feet of their young hearers on the paths of uprightness, and lead them to the highest happiness and peace. Their eyes were open to the dangers of intoxicating liquor.

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler,  
And whosoever erreth thereby is not wise." (Prov. 20: 1.  
See also 23: 29-35.)

They were not blind to the temptation to greed, nor to the wrongs which were inflicted upon the poor by the rich. They therefore lifted up their voice in a plea for justice and mercy.

“He that oppresses the poor, reviles his Maker,  
But he who has mercy on the needy honors Him.” (Prov.  
14: 31. See also 21: 13, and 23: 10-11.)

What seems to have distressed the wise men most of all, as they looked out upon life, was the heart-breaking estrangements which they saw between men who should have been friends. One of the most notable characteristics of the book of Proverbs is the large number of exhortations to self-control, and charity, and forgiveness, which it contains.

“A fool utters all his anger,  
But a wise man keeps it back.” (Prov. 29: 11.)

“He who covers up transgression seeks love;  
But he who harps on a matter, alienates his friend.” (Prov.  
17: 9.)

Since the wise men felt so strongly on this point, we are not surprised to find that they kept their most scathing condemnations for tale-bearers and trouble-makers. Too often they had seen men who had been dear friends, passing each other with averted faces. Some lying scandal-monger had been sowing his evil seed! If you have anything to say against a man, say it to his face, the wise men urged. Don't talk about him behind his back!

“He who winks with the eye, causes trouble:  
But he who reproves openly makes peace.” (Prov. 10: 10.  
See also 25: 23, and 26: 20.)

### THE LATER WISE MEN: THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

As regards the date when the earliest of the sayings of the wise men were written, it is quite impossible to come to any conclusion. The collection of sayings which has come down to us as the book of Proverbs was probably completed after the Greeks entered Palestine, that is, after 333 B.C. Like the book of Psalms, it was made up of several earlier and smaller collections.



Later tradition called Solomon the author, on account of his reputation for wisdom. The wise men were at the zenith of their popularity and influence during this Greek period in Jewish history. The people had lost faith in the prophets, excepting those of former times, whose writings had come down to them. Hence no one tried to speak as a prophet. So it came about that the wise men became for a time the chief moral and religious leaders of the people. They really were prophets under another name. They no longer confined themselves to the coining of short proverbs but composed longer discourses more like the addresses of the prophets, calling upon men to seek wisdom, and to walk in the path of righteousness. The first nine chapters of the book of Proverbs are largely made up of these more extended discourses.

These later wise men were also like the prophets in claiming that God had inspired their words. They grasped the sublime thought that all human wisdom is from God, and that God sends to every man just as much of the light of his truth as the man is able and willing to receive. Hence,

“The path of the righteous is as a dawning light,  
That shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” (Prov.  
4: 18.)

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. How does it happen that the words "The Proverbs of Solomon" stand at the beginning of the tenth chapter of the book of Proverbs? (10: 1.)

2. How do you think the wise men were able to gain so thorough a knowledge of human nature?

3. Do the Proverbs deal chiefly with the relations between men and men, or with the relations between men and God?

4. To what extent would you call the wise men religious as well as moral teachers?

5. Mention one or more proverbs of those quoted in this chapter, which you especially admire.

## TO SUM UP

1. What part of an Oriental town corresponded to our "public square"?

2. What kind of persons were the "wise men" among the ancient Hebrews?

3. Why did they like to "sit in the gate"?

4. Give an example of a humorous saying by the wise men recorded in our book of Proverbs.

5. Give an example of some saying showing their sympathetic understanding of human nature.

6. Give an illustration of their practical common sense.

7. Mention two kinds of wrong-doing which they frequently condemned.

8. How did it come about that during the Greek period of Old Testament history the wise men were the chief religious teachers of the Hebrews?

9. What chapters in the book of Proverbs were probably written latest?

10. At about what date did the book come into existence in its present form?

11. How did the name of Solomon become associated with the book?

### NOTEBOOK WORK

Clip out from some cheap or worn copy of the Old Testament all the proverbs you can find which condemn anger and strife and which tell how to live peaceably. Paste them in your notebook, in what seems to you the best order. Read with special care chapters 10-29.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### A MAN UNJUSTLY CONDEMNED

#### THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK OF JOB

When San Francisco was destroyed by an earthquake, in the year 1906, many people explained the catastrophe as a punishment sent on the city by the Almighty, because of its wickedness. In all ages and to some extent even today, men have been inclined to interpret any unusual calamity as the result of wrong-doing. In our every-day life also, we are easily biased against the poor, the ragged and the "down and out." "It is probably their own fault," we say, while on the other hand, it is hard for us to believe that a rich, successful and prosperous citizen can possibly be a scoundrel. Half unconsciously we assume that all pain and sorrow must be the direct consequence of sin and that good fortune is always the reward of virtue.

Among the ancient Jews this assumption was the generally accepted belief. When Jesus and his disciples came one day upon a wayside beggar, who had been blind from his birth, the disciples asked the Master, "Rabbi, who hath sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" A more heartless doctrine never existed. Jesus did not accept it. To be sure, like many such mistaken beliefs it contained a half truth. Much of the world's sorrow is no doubt caused by wrong-doing. But as a result of this extreme and one-sided idea, men are led to stifle their natural sympathies, and to become the more cold and suspicious toward a fellow-creature, the greater and more pitiable his distress.

## A GREAT-SOULED MAN

The author of the book of Job was a victim of this cruel belief. He probably lived within a century of Nehemiah's time, either before or after. We can infer something about the facts of his life from his book. In a general way, although not in detail, his own experiences are probably reflected in the main character of the book. He belonged to the class of "wise men." No doubt he had many pupils and occupied a position of honor in the community. Few teachers ever inspired their hearers with nobler ideals, for he was filled with a great love for justice and mercy and truth. The thirty-first chapter of his book is one of the greatest descriptions of a righteous man to be found in all literature. It is too little known and appreciated. It has been said that its sentences "prick the conscience like needles." The man who wrote it was one of God's noblemen. He was pure in heart, a friend of the fatherless and the widow, a champion of the oppressed. He revered all human beings, even slaves, as created in the image of God. He was just and honorable in all things. He walked with God, and was conscious of God's presence with him from day to day.

## THE COMING OF ADVERISTY

Into this quiet, happy life as a respected friend and neighbor and a revered moral counsellor, came misfortune. Perhaps it was an epidemic of disease sweeping away his children. Perhaps it was the loss of his property. Perhaps it was some bodily infirmity. We can only infer from his book that it was very painful and that the facts regarding it were known by all.

Such a misfortune would have been hard enough to bear at any time and under any circumstances. But far worse than the misfortune itself, to this man's sensitive nature, was the social ostracism and unfeeling condemnation, to which in those days such a sufferer found himself subjected. His neighbors whispered among them-

selves as he passed them. His old friends became cold to him. When wistfully he stretched out his hands towards them, they rebuffed him. Formerly he had been a leader.

“ When I went forth to the gate unto the city,  
When I prepared my seat in the broad place,  
The young men saw me and hid themselves;  
The aged rose up and stood;  
The princes refrained from talking  
And laid their hand on their mouth.” (Job 29: 7-8.)

Now, however, he is treated with disrespect and even contempt.

“ But now, I am become their song,  
Yea, I am a byword unto them;  
They abhor me, they stand aloof from me,  
And spare not to spit at the sight of me.” (Job 30: 9-10.)

Those who had grudges against him invented lies about him, which were widely believed. Like the Jewish officer Dreyfus in the French army, or the apostle Paul among his own people, he was reduced to the position of an outcast and a pariah.

### THE NEED OF GOD'S SYMPATHY

Such men as Paul could still turn to God, when forsaken by their fellowmen, and find comfort in the assurance that God understood all. But the author of Job was denied that supreme solace, for he himself had been trained in the beliefs of his time, and supposed that God was punishing him. To be sure, God was supposed to know all things, and it would seem that He must know that this man was not what his neighbors said. But why then was God sending this suffering? So the man could only keep saying to himself, “ Even God does not understand! Why does He think that I am wicked? What have I done? Why does He not love me any more? ”



He was haunted by the desire to meet God somehow face to face, so that he could explain to Him his side of the case.

"O that I knew where I might find Him,  
That I might come even to His throne.

"I would order my cause before him,  
And fill my mouth with arguments.  
I would know the words which he would answer me,  
And understand what he would say to me.  
Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power?  
Nay but he would give heed unto me." (Job 23:2-6.)

Sometimes he dreamed of a future life beyond the grave when he would see and talk with God, and the clouds of misunderstanding between them would all be rolled away.

"If a man die shall he live again?  
All the days of my warfare would I wait;  
Thou wouldst call, and I would answer thee,  
Thou wouldst yearn for me, the work of thy hands." (Job 14:14-15.)

Thus he became one of those who first taught the world the value of the hope of immortality.

### FINDING GOD BY A NEW PATH

He did not need to wait for a future life, however, before his longings were satisfied. In the midst of his despair the thought came to him, perhaps the old doctrine was not wholly true. Perhaps we should not suppose that all human sorrow is the result of sin and is to be interpreted as punishment from God. God is infinitely greater and wiser than we; surely He may have a purpose in sending pain, which we cannot map out in our little human creeds. Who are we to think that we can understand the plans and purposes of God?

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?  
Declare, if thou hast understanding.

Whereupon were the foundations of the earth fastened  
Or who laid the cornerstone thereof:  
When the morning stars sang together,  
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?

“Or who shut up the sea with doors  
When it brake forth and issued out of the womb:  
When I made clouds the garment thereof,  
And thick darkness a swaddling-band for it?

“And marked out for it my bound,  
And set bars and doors,  
And said, Hitherto shalt thou come but no further,  
And here shall thy proud waves be stayed.” (Job 38: 6-11.)

As he reflected, other facts came to mind which bore out this new idea. He had known others who had suffered much and had been called sinners, but he now began to believe that they too had been innocent. He knew that some of those upon whom fortune seemed to smile were really scoundrels. The more he thought about it, the more certain he became that that old and universally accepted belief was a mistaken one.

“But then, it follows,” he thought, “that my own troubles are not necessarily a sign of God’s displeasure. I may believe that God after all does understand; He is not punishing me; He loves me still.” So like some sobbing child who has mistakenly supposed that his father has rebuked him, this troubled heart found peace in the Divine Father’s arms: “My child,” God seemed to say, “it was you who did not understand.”

The existence of evil in the world is one of the problems which mankind has not yet solved. This great man, through his own experience and his own longings, was led to take one important step towards its solution. He was at least able to refute the old theory that good fortune is always a reward for right conduct and that evil fortune is always retribution for wrong-doing. Did he ever ask the further question, “What then is the true explanation of sorrow and pain?” Probably not. In

all likelihood he was content to have demolished that old doctrine which had led him to suppose that God did not understand him. No matter what misfortune might come, or how he might be accused by men, he could never again be estranged from God; for now he could say, "My Father knows that I am guiltless."

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. In addition to sickness and loss of property, the following have been frequently considered evidences of a vicious disposition: insanity, drunkenness, crime. To what extent should they be classed as misfortunes?

2. What great message has the author of Job for all who are unjustly condemned and despised?

3. How may we explain the willingness of prophets and reformers to face criticism for the sake of what they believe to be right?

4. Mention one or two favorite verses or passages from the book of Job. (Suggested readings, Job 29-31.)

## TO SUM UP

1. At about what time in the history of Judah was the book of Job written?

2. What was the orthodox belief of the Jews at this time regarding pain and trouble?

3. What kind of a man was the author of Job?

4. Why did Job's friends and neighbors think him a sinner?

5. Why did he suppose that God also misjudged him, and considered him a sinner?

6. For what did he chiefly long?

7. Why did he dream of a life after death?

8. How did he come at last to a truer idea of God's attitude toward him?

9. What comforting faith did he thus gain?

## CHAPTER XXXII

### A MAN WHO THOUGHT FOR HIMSELF

#### THE STORY OF THE BOOK OF JOB

Into the hands of the man whose life-story is told in the preceding chapter, there fell one day a small book which greatly stirred him. It was a story about a certain righteous man named Job who lived in the land of Uz, east of Canaan. At the beginning of the story Job was very prosperous. He had great possessions, such as lands, houses, sheep and cattle. He was also happy in his family life, having many sons and daughters. Nor did this prosperity make him proud, but he continued to live as an humble and upright servant of Jehovah.

One day, however, there was a council in heaven and all the angels came to report to Jehovah what they had been doing. Among them was one called "the Satan." In those days this word "Satan" was not used as meaning the Evil One, but rather as the designation of a heavenly official whose special duty, as people supposed, was to report to Jehovah any evil that needed to be investigated. On this occasion, the Satan brought an accusation against Job, declaring that his seeming goodness was prompted by selfish motives. "Doth Job serve God for naught?" he asked. "Take away his prosperity and he will curse thee to thy face." So, in order to give Job a chance to prove these charges false, Jehovah gave permission to the Satan to bring trouble upon him.

It came to pass, therefore, that all his flocks and herds were destroyed and all his property swept away. His sons and daughters were slain; and at last, Job himself

was stricken down with leprosy, the most dreaded of all diseases. His wife besought him to curse God and die. Three friends came to comfort him, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, and they were so horrified by his condition that they sat in silence for seven days. But through it all Job remained patient and loyal to Jehovah. "Jehovah gave," he said, "and Jehovah hath taken away. Blessed be the name of Jehovah."

### THE ORIGIN OF A GREAT LITERARY MASTERPIECE

With the teachings of this story, the wise man of whom we are speaking found himself in agreement. It showed that God sometimes allows even innocent persons to suffer. He also, like Job in the story, had learned to cling to his faith in God no matter what troubles may come. He did not believe, however, that such trust ought to consist in submission to the mistaken ideas of other men about God and God's dealings.

As he pondered over the story he felt within him the stirrings of a great idea. He determined to add to it a series of dialogues between Job and those three friends who came to comfort him. Possibly he got the idea of the dialogues from the Greek dramas, or from the famous dialogues of Plato, the great Athenian philosopher. At any rate, he produced a masterpiece of the imagination which is more like a drama than anything else in the literature of the ancient Hebrews, and which in literary greatness has only three or four equals in the literature of the world. His purpose was to help other troubled and disconsolate souls who had lost their sense of God's presence and sympathy because of their misfortunes. He would show through the mouth of Job how he himself had struggled and agonized and how only by rejecting the usual belief about rewards and punishments had he found peace at last. He was filled with a passionate



desire to refute forever that old doctrine which had cruelly tortured so many.

### JOB, THE THREE FRIENDS, AND GOD

The author represents the three friends as accepting the orthodox belief. Hence, like the author's old neighbors, they cannot give Job any real sympathy. Instead, they keep trying to make him confess that he has been a sinner. (See Job 4: 17-19, and 22: 5-7.) Job at last cries out against them. "Miserable comforters are ye all." (Job 16: 2.) In answer to the charges of his friends, Job insists that he knows of no great crimes to confess.

"Till I die I will not put away mine integrity from me,  
My righteousness I hold fast and will not let it go." (Job 27: 4-6.)

The most remarkable passages in these dialogues are those which express Job's varying attitudes toward God. They reveal to us the tortured writhings of those dreadful days in the author's own experience when he thought God was angry with him. Job is represented sometimes as feeling that God is a kind of revengeful Giant, or an omnipresent Spy, whose eye was constantly upon him with a hostile stare.

"Am I a demon of the abyss, or a sea-monster,  
That thou settest a watch over me?  
How long wilt thou not look away from me  
Nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle?" (Job 7: 12-19.)

Again and again Job points out the wrongs of human society, and even charges God with being responsible.

"Wherefore do the wicked live,  
Become old, wax mighty in power?" (Job 21: 7.)

"The earth is given into the hand of the wicked.  
He covereth the faces of the judges thereof.  
If it be not He [that is, God] then who is it?" (Job 9: 24.)

At the same time, along with these feelings of resentment at a God who seemed so unjust, are mingled expressions of longing for reconciliation with the divine Companion. Sometimes he dreams of a vindication in the eyes of future generations, or better still in an individual life after death. From beginning to end his chief cry is for a hearing before God, that he might defend himself and prove his innocence. In a thrilling climax he declares that the very charges brought against him will prove a wreath of honor.

“O that I had one to hear me.

Lo, here is my signature, let the Almighty answer me!

Oh that I had the indictment, which mine enemy hath written.

Surely I would carry it upon my shoulder;

I would bind it to me as a crown.

I would account for all my steps.

As a prince would I go near unto him.” (Job 31:35-37.)

This great challenge is represented as bringing its response: “Then Jehovah answered Job out of the whirlwind.” In the speech which is placed in the mouth of Jehovah the greatness and mystery of the universe are emphasized with unparalleled beauty and literary grandeur. (See Job 38-40.) In this way Job is invited to raise his eyes to the infinite horizon of God’s universe and in its exhaustless mystery to find room for faith. God is not tied down in His actions to the fine-spun theories of the three friends. He may not be angry even though He does send pain. On the other hand, those who charge God with injustice in His government of the world are hasty and presumptuous. Good men do suffer and wicked men do prosper; in this Job was right; but God may have reasons for permitting these things which we cannot fathom.

The author closed his book with the last part of the old prose story in which Jehovah condemns the three friends, and praises Job. The latter had at least been

honest, even though presumptuous, and he thus found the vindication for which he longed.

### LATER ADDITIONS TO THE BOOK OF JOB

A book so bold and radical as this one naturally made a sensation wherever it was circulated. Many of the utterances which the author had placed in the mouth of Job were regarded as blasphemous. No doubt the neighbors looked with even greater horror than ever upon him. "We were sure he was a wicked man; now he has proved it," they said. Children went around by another street to avoid passing his house. In the market place, men pointed after him when he passed, and said, "There goes the infidel."

There is reason to believe that some parts of the book, which were most shocking to orthodox readers, were cut out of the copies from which our present version is descended. We would give much to have them restored to us. Additions were also made. Our present book of Job seems indeed like a kind of symposium, in which a number of different voices are heard. It is generally agreed that chapters 32-37, in which a new character, Elihu, is introduced, were added by a later writer, who was offended by some of the charges made by Job against the Almighty, but who did not seem to understand the original author's meaning.

We, today, are perhaps better able to understand and appreciate the meaning of these great dialogues than any previous generation. The world is just awakening to the value of independent thought on the part of each individual. It is just learning that the first duty of every man is to be honest with himself. "Ye are forgers of lies," says Job, in disgust with the arguments of his friends.

"Will ye speak what is wrong for God,  
And utter falsehoods for his sake?  
Will ye be partisans for God,

Be special pleaders in his cause?  
Would it be well, should he search you out?  
Could ye deceive him, as you would deceive a man?  
Verily he would punish you,  
If dishonestly you favored him." (Job 13: 4-10.)

Such a book as this is just what we need today, to help us to stand on our own feet, to see with our eyes, to think our own thoughts and to follow the truth, wherever it may lead.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Why were the neighbors of the author of Job so opposed to his new ideas?

2. Did Job do wrong in doubting for a time the justice of God's dealings?

3. Is it right to doubt such religious beliefs as the existence of God, and the future life?

4. What passages in the book of Job do you like the best? (Suggested readings, Job 1-3, or 19, or 38-40.)

TO SUM UP

1. What kind of a being was "the Satan," according to the old story of Job?

2. What accusation did the Satan bring against Job?

3. Why did Jehovah permit the Satan to bring trouble upon Job?

4. What did Job say, when his wife urged him to "curse God and die"?

5. What was added to this story of Job, by the great thinker about whom we studied in the preceding chapter?

6. What was his purpose in writing the poetical dialogues?

7. Why does Job, in these dialogues, say to his three friends, "Miserable comforters are ye all"?

8. How does Job reply to their charges against him?

9. What accusations does Job make against God?

10. What is the new idea that Jehovah brings to him "out of the whirlwind"?

11. What changes were made in the book of Job by later writers, and why?

#### NOTEBOOK WORK

Write in your notebook brief explanations of the following famous passages from the book of Job: (1) 19:23-25 (see marginal rendering Vindicator, instead of Redeemer). (2) 23:3-9.



## CHAPTER XXXIII

### A PESSIMIST AND AN OPTIMIST

#### ECCLESIASTES AND ECCLESIASTICUS

Ecclesiastes and Ecclesiasticus: what a curious pair of book titles! So closely similar that one needs to look twice to distinguish them. These two books are also closely related in other ways than the similarity of names. They were written about the same time (200 B.C.), and probably in the same city, Jerusalem, and quite possibly by men who were personally acquainted. Yet in general character no two books could be more different. One of them, Ecclesiastes, was written by a pessimist. The other, Ecclesiasticus, was written by an optimist.

#### THE AUTHOR OF ECCLESIASTES

The pessimist was probably a priest in the temple at Jerusalem who wrote in his old age. He is frequently referred to as Koheleth, although this was his assumed title rather than his proper name. The word Ecclesiastes is the Greek translation and it is translated "the Preacher" in our English Bible. He was a professional "wise man." We know nothing of his life except what we can infer from his writings, and from the general conditions of his times.

In those days, Palestine was ruled from Egypt by the Greek dynasty known as the Ptolemies. Most of these monarchs as individuals were good-natured and well-meaning enough, but weak. Their Jewish subjects had much of which to complain. The subordinate officials who were placed over the Jews were a set of

petty grafters. "The man higher up," is not a modern invention. Both the man, and name for him, existed in Koheleth's time. "If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and the violent taking away of justice and righteousness in a province, do not wonder at it, for one high officer is watching above another, and there are those who are still higher up." (Eccl. 5: 8.) This means that the minor officials were practically compelled by their superiors to extort money from their subjects. The larger share of this money was paid over to these higher officers, and to those "still higher up."

Under such a government as this the Jews naturally did not find life very inspiring. Its prizes seemed to go, not to the most worthy, but to those with a "pull"; while for the lack of a "pull" one was constantly in danger of suffering some cruel injustice. Many indeed found inspiration for worthy effort, in the hope that Israel would some day be restored to her former glory as an independent nation. But as the years and centuries dragged by, this hope grew more and more shadowy. Under these conditions, men had few incentives to progress, and life lost its interest and zest.

Now our "preacher" Koheleth seems to have been personally very prosperous. He probably had plenty of money; he had been given the advantages of an education, and occupied a high social position; and yet, he was a pessimist. He asked himself the question, "Is life worth living?" — and answered, "No. It is mere emptiness." "Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." (Eccl. 1: 2.) He could not see that the bitter experiences of life led to any good. Men can endure bravely almost any amount of suffering, if only it leads to something worth while, but to him existence seemed to be a tiresome treadmill, going round and round, without accomplishing anything. "The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full. All things are full of weariness; man cannot utter it. The eye is not satisfied

with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. That which has been is that which will be; and that which has been done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun." (Eccl. 1:6-9.)

There were indeed some in those days who were beginning to look forward to a life after death, thinking that the wrongs of this life might be set right in the next. (See Chapter XXVII.) But Koheleth could only say, What proof have you that man does not die as the beasts die? (Eccl. 3:11-21.)

### KOHELETH'S BOOK — ECCLESIASTES

The message which Koheleth seems to convey in writing his book is, enjoy life as best you can from day to day. He assumed the point of view of King Solomon. With vast wealth and power, Solomon, who was reputed to be exceedingly wise, surely must have been able to enjoy all that the world had to offer of pleasure and happiness. So Koheleth speaks in the character of Solomon, and tells how he put all things to the test; how he surrounded himself with all conceivable pleasures: vineyards, gardens and parks; men-servants and maid-servants; musical instruments; men-singers and women-singers; gold, silver and precious stones; and his conclusion is, that "all is vanity and a striving after wind." (Eccl. 1:14, 2:11.)

What then is his advice to his fellowmen? Simply this, that "there is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink and make his soul enjoy good in his labor." In other words, do not sacrifice the pleasure of today for some fancied goal to be attained tomorrow. Do not spend your strength in toilsome striving. "Be not righteous overmuch; neither make thyself overwise." (Eccl. 7:16.) On the other hand, he does not counsel extreme dissipation, for that in turn brings pain. "Be not wicked overmuch; why shouldest thou die before thy time?" (Eccl. 7:17.)

The kernel of his whole philosophy is in the closing

section, where he bids the young to enjoy themselves in their youth and to snatch a few fleeting pleasures while they may. For quickly the evil days will draw nigh, and "the years when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them." A queer book for a "preacher" to write! one might well exclaim. Some have declared it entirely out of place in the Bible. On behalf of Koheleth, however, it should be said that he was evidently sincere; that he himself was not sensual or degraded; and that he was saddened by the wrongs which he saw inflicted on the helpless and the poor, among his fellow-men. Had he lived in a different age, he might have seen life differently and might have written a different kind of a book.

#### THE AUTHOR OF ECCLESIASTICUS

The optimist who wrote not Ecclesiastes but Ecclesiasticus was another Jewish wise man, named Joshua ben Sira. This book is not included in the regular collection of Old Testament books, but was preserved in a later collection known as the "Apocrypha." You may perhaps find these "Apocryphal books" in your old family Bible or in the big pulpit Bible of your church, between the Old and the New Testaments; and among them you will find Ecclesiasticus.

Like Koheleth, Joshua ben Sira probably lived in Jerusalem, and he also may have been a priest. We may reasonably suppose that the two men were acquainted. Perhaps they were accustomed to discuss together in the temple courts the deep questions of life. It is certain at any rate that Ben Sira was well acquainted with Koheleth's pessimistic ideas, for he plainly alludes to them in his own writings. In case the two men did occasionally argue together the conversation might have run somewhat as follows:

"Ben Sira," Koheleth would say, "you are mistaken. All things are vanity and a striving after wind. For what hath a man of all his labor, and of the striving

of his heart, wherein he laboreth under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his task vexation; yea, even in the night his heart taketh no rest." (Eccl. 2:22-23.) Then ben Sira would reply, "My friend, I know that

"Great travail is created for every man,  
And a heavy yoke is upon the sons of Adam;  
From him that sitteth on a throne of glory  
Even unto him that is humbled in earth and ashes;  
From him that weareth purple and a crown,  
Even unto him that is clothed with a hempen frock." (Ecclus. 40: 1-4.)

"At the same time there are many other good things which make life sweet.

"The life of one that laboreth, and is contented, shall be made sweet.

A friend and a companion never meet amiss,  
And a wife with her husband is above both." (Ecclus. 40: 18-23.)

"Seek not things that are too hard for thee  
And search not out things that are above thy strength,  
For the conceit of many hath led them astray;  
And evil surmising hath caused their judgment to slip."  
(Ecclus. 3: 21-24.)

### THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTICUS

Ben Sira's book is probably a collection of the best of his addresses to his pupils. Its spirit is absolutely different from that of Koheleth, as expressed in Ecclesiastes. They are both "Wisdom" books but Ben Sira's book is cheerful and optimistic in its outlook on life. In many ways it is like the book of Proverbs, being full of pithy, practical good sense. For example, it praises good health.

"Better is a poor man who has a sound and strong constitution,  
Than a rich man who is infirm in body." (Ecclus. 29: 14-15.)

It also gives homely advice regarding table manners.



“ Eat, as becometh a man, those things which are set before thee;  
And eat not greedily, lest thou be hated.” (Ecclus. 31: 16-28.)

The chief difference between Koheleth and Ben Sira is that the latter counsels an earnest and purposeful life. He sees clearly that there are certain goals for which it is well worth while to strive. One of these is true wisdom:

“ My son, gather instruction from thy youth up;  
And even unto hoar hairs thou shalt find wisdom.” (Ecclus. 6: 18-28.)

Another is justice and kindness to one's fellowmen:

“ Be as a father unto the fatherless,  
And instead of a husband unto their mother.  
So shalt thou be as a son of the Most High,  
And he shall love thee more than thy mother doth.” (Ecclus. 4: 10.)

Above all other satisfactions in life is the reverent worship of God.

“ Riches and strength will lift up the heart,  
And the fear of the Lord is above both.  
The fear of the Lord is as a garden of blessing,  
And covereth a man above all glory.” (Ecclus. 40: 26-27.)



### QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Read Eccl. 7:26-28. What do these verses perhaps indicate as to Koheleth's family life?
  
2. Read Eccl. 1:12—2:26. In what verses, if any, does Koheleth mention love and unselfishness as a possible source of happiness?
  
3. Do you discover any facts in connection with the above two questions which help to explain Koheleth's pessimism?
  
4. Of the good things in life mentioned by Ben Sira, which seems to you the best?
  
5. Compare Ben Sira's attitude toward injustice and oppression with that of Koheleth. Which was the more praiseworthy?
  
6. What is your favorite verse or passage of those quoted in this chapter? (Suggested readings, Eccl. 1—2.)

### TO SUM UP

1. When and where did the man probably live whom we call Koheleth?
2. What book in the Old Testament did he write?
3. What discouraging conditions were there in Koheleth's time which helped to make him a pessimist?

4. What reasons does he give in his book for calling life evil?
5. What is his advice to his fellowmen?
6. When and where did Joshua Ben Sira probably live?
7. What book did he write?
8. Where may it be found in an English translation?
9. What was Ben Sira's purpose in writing this book?
10. What advice did he give on the following subjects:  
good health; table manners, self-respect; kindness to one's  
fellows; the worship of God?

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### GREEK-SPEAKING JEWS WHO WERE TRUE TO THEIR FAITH

#### THE GREEK OLD TESTAMENT AND THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

When Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire, the Greeks and the Jews, the two leading races of the ancient world, came for the first time in close contact with each other. Each race had much to be proud of in its history and civilization, but the differences between them were striking. The Greeks had beautiful works of art, a beautiful literature, and a remarkable philosophy. The Jews had little art, and must have seemed to the Greeks scarcely civilized. Yet in their laws and in the moral and religious teachings of their prophets they had something far greater than all the glories of Athens.

It was natural that two races so intensely proud should clash. Among the Jews, some indeed became admirers of the Greeks and the new Greek ways. They gave their children Greek names, Jason instead of Joshua, and James instead of Jacob. Worse still, they were sometimes even ashamed of their own people and tried to hide the fact that they were Jews. They ceased to keep the Sabbath, and went no more to the synagogue. Others, on the contrary, could see nothing but evil in the Greeks, and hated their whole civilization.

#### THE GREEK TRANSLATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Within a century after the conquests of Alexander the Great, it is probable that Greek was almost universally spoken and understood in all the countries around the

eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea. It became the language of commerce, like English in some parts of the world today. As a result, the Jews who were engaged in business in these countries forgot within a few generations their own language and spoke only Greek. There were large colonies of Greek-speaking Jews in many parts of Egypt, especially in the city of Alexandria. There were Jews also in Antioch, the beautiful city which was built by Antiochus, one of Alexander's generals. There were Jews in Asia Minor and in Greece. In fact the Jews were scattered throughout all these countries which Alexander's armies had conquered, and for the most part they spoke only Greek.

This made it necessary that the books of the Jewish religion should be translated into Greek, if these Jews in foreign lands were not to forget Jehovah, the God of their fathers. Therefore, about the year 250 B.C., the five books of the Law were translated into Greek, by certain Jewish scholars in Egypt. According to tradition they were encouraged in this work by Ptolemy, the Greek ruler of Egypt, who was said to be desirous of learning more about the Jewish religion. It was said that not only the law but also all the other books were translated at the same time, by seventy-two men, six elders from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, sent down to Alexandria from Jerusalem at the request of Ptolemy. For this reason the Greek Old Testament has commonly been called the Septuagint, or the book of the Seventy. As a matter of fact, however, the work was done by different men, at different times, extending over a period of at least a hundred years.

In spite of the inevitable imperfections of the translation, this Greek Old Testament exerted a great influence. It became for a time the Bible of the majority of the Jews. The New Testament writers in quoting from the Old Testament, in nearly all cases, used the Greek version. As a result, we notice in our English Bible, certain differences between the quotations as they appear

in the New Testament and the original Old Testament form. Proper names, for example (in the Authorized Version), are spelled differently; Noe, for Noah, and Esaias and Jeremias, for Isaiah and Jeremiah. Through this translation many Gentiles became interested in the religion of the one God, Jehovah. Thus, not only were the Jews in foreign lands kept loyal to the faith of their fathers, but more than that Judaism was transformed into a missionary religion. When the first Christian missionaries began to preach to Gentiles, they found many who were already interested in their message, through reading this translation of the Old Testament. It was, therefore, an important step in the preparation of the world for Christianity.

#### RELIGIOUS TRUTHS AMONG THE GREEKS

With the Greek language there came to the Jews the possibility of reading books by Greek writers. Many of these writings were masterpieces. While some of the Jews were captivated by them, others felt nothing but contempt for all things Greek. They would have scorned as heathen the great thinkers of Athens, and even to touch one of their books would have seemed to them a pollution.

We may imagine one of these men passing through the public square of a Greek city, perhaps Alexandria, and stopping for a few moments to rest in the shade of a fountain. A man was speaking near by, and a group of listeners was gathered about him, just as in Jewish cities a wise man gathered his pupils around him in the "city gate." These people appeared to be Greeks, or "heathen," as the Jew considered them. He could not help overhearing some of the words of the speaker, and they appealed to him as reasonable and true, and indeed strangely like some things in the writings of the prophets and wise men of his own people. The speaker proclaimed the existence of one God, and ridiculed idol-worship. "There is one God," he said, "supreme

among gods and men, resembling mortals neither in form nor in mind."

"That man has been reading our book of Isaiah," thought the Jew, "where the prophet says, 'My ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.' " So he drew nearer to the circle, and the speaker greeted him with a friendly smile. After the address was finished, the Jew lingered. He discovered that the speaker, though a Greek, was a lover of wisdom, or a "philosopher." He had never heard of the prophet Isaiah, nor of any of the Jewish books, but was anxious to know more of them. So they agreed to meet again, and exchange books. "You bring me your Isaiah," said the Greek, "and I will give you a copy of my Plato." Thus was begun an acquaintance which opened the eyes of the Jew to a number of astonishing facts. He found that the more intelligent Greeks believed in one God, as did the Jews. He found many other noble teachings in the writings of such men as Plato, nor were these teachings borrowed from the Jews, for some of these ideas had seldom been thought of as yet, even in Israel. For example, he came upon the idea of a life after death. The author of Job had suggested this idea, and some of the Psalm-writers also, but others like Koheleth had ridiculed it. It was generally believed among the Jews of his day that death ends all, or at any rate all that is worth while in life. But Socrates, the greatest teacher among the Greeks, who was put to death for his loyalty to the truth, had looked forward with eagerness to a future life.

This thought made a deep impression on the Jew. If we are not mere creatures of a moment, then that explains our strange sense of the infinite importance of righteousness. The humblest human life is thus lifted to a new glory and dignity. "God has spoken through these great men of Greece," thought the Jew. "And we Jews may learn from them. Clearly God's spirit



is not confined to Israel, but speaks to the hearts of men of all nations, or to as many as are willing to listen."

### A RELIGIOUS BOOK BY A GREEK-SPEAKING JEW

This new message of a future life was much needed just at that time. The popular book among the younger Jews was Koheleth, with his advice to "enjoy life while it lasts, for there is nothing beyond." These young men invariably went further than Koheleth had intended, and indulged in all kinds of dissolute vices. The whole atmosphere of a Greek city like Alexandria or Antioch seemed to encourage such a life. Most men were seeking only to get money, in order to gratify their selfish desires. Many even of the strict Jews were thoroughly selfish. They were careful to keep the law of Moses, to be sure, and prided themselves on being better than the heathen, but their lives were taken up with mere money-making. Such a religion did not command the respect of the younger men, who openly threw off all restraints. They justified themselves in their wicked deeds by quoting not only from the Jew, Koheleth, but also from certain Greek writers, who argued that there is no God, and that all things happen by chance.

Now this Jew of whom we are speaking felt that he was specially qualified to combat these errors, for he was acquainted with the writings of the Greeks. He himself had learned from them to believe in immortality. He, therefore, entered upon an heroic life as a moral reformer. In the face of taunts and persecution both from bigoted Jews who reproached him for his friendship with Greeks, and from the renegade Jews who ridiculed all religion, he continued to stand for the highest ideals of justice and love. He told his fellow-Jews that the greatest of the Greeks had by no means approved of selfishness and injustice, but that their teachings were in harmony with the noblest teachings of the prophets and wise men of Israel; that indeed they had wondrously

supplemented the prophets by showing that this life on earth is but the preparation for a life everlasting.

Finally, he wrote a remarkable book, in which he set down those ideas for which he had so long been contending. In some respects, it was a reply to the book by Koheleth, Ecclesiastes. Like Koheleth, he wrote in the name of Solomon. Hence the title of the book is the Wisdom of Solomon. He made Solomon tell a very different story, however, from that in Ecclesiastes; not that, "the same event happeneth to the good and bad, the wise and the foolish," but that a noble and upright life is immortal; while the wages of sin is death.

"For God made not death

Neither delighteth he when the living perish.

For righteousness is immortal,

But unrighteousness is the obtaining of death." (Wis. Sol. 1:3-15.)

This book, like that by Ben Sira, was not finally included in the Old Testament, and is found only among the Apocryphal books. It was probably a part of Paul's Bible, however, and it probably wielded a great influence on Paul and other early Christian leaders, and thus indirectly it has been one of the great forces which have helped mankind to believe in the life eternal.

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. How do you think Gentile Greeks first became interested in the Greek Old Testament?

2. Of two Jews in Egypt, which would be most likely to be true to his own religion: one who tried to interest Gentiles in the Old Testament; or one who cared nothing for such missionary effort? Why?

3. Which Jews were most truly loyal to their own religion: those who were willing to read and learn from Greek books, or those who would have nothing to do with them? Explain.

4. Do you think that we Christians may learn any religious truth from the Hindus, Chinese, Japanese, and Mohammedans, as the Jews learned from the Greeks?

5. How would you answer the following common objection to foreign missions: "I do not believe in sending missionaries to foreign lands. They have their own religions already, which may be better suited to them than ours"?

## TO SUM UP

1. Explain why it was necessary to translate the Old Testament books into Greek.

2. When and where was the Pentateuch translated?

3. Over about how long a period of time did the entire work of translation extend?

4. On account of what tradition is this translation generally called the Septuagint?
5. How did this translation prepare the way for Christianity?
6. Mention three different ways in which different Jews regarded Greek ideas.
7. Mention one important religious truth which the Jews learned in part from the Greeks.
8. What did the author of the "Wisdom of Solomon" think of the book of Ecclesiastes?
9. In what language was this book written?
10. What was the author's chief message to his fellowmen?

### NOTEBOOK WORK

Find the book of the Wisdom of Solomon, in the pulpit Bible of your church, or elsewhere, and copy into your notebook other quotations besides those in this chapter, teaching the truth of immortality. For example, chapter 2:23-24, 5:15-16.

Would you say that this book teaches the immortality of all human souls, or only of the good?

## CHAPTER XXXV

### A STORY OF MARTYRDOM AND TRIUMPH

#### DANIEL AND I MACCABEES

During the period when the Jews were ruled by the Ptolemies (between 300 and 200 B.C.), the conflict between the Greeks and Jews had been for the most part in the field of ideas. Good had come to the Jews as well as evil. Though some were led into wrong-doing by the lower elements in Greek life, others received new and valuable ideas regarding religious truth.

Soon after 200 B.C., however, Palestine was taken from the Ptolemies by the Greek rulers of Antioch. In the year 168 B.C., a young prince named Antiochus Epiphanes came to the throne, and to the Jews his reign brought nothing but trouble and sorrow. In the first place, he was an enthusiast for Greek ideas, including the old Greek religion with its worship of many gods; such as Zeus, Hermes, and Athena; and it irritated him that the Jews alone of all his subjects refused to offer sacrifices to Zeus. In the second place, he was in constant need of money, and coveted the treasures in the Jerusalem temple. When the Jews violently resisted his attempt to enter and plunder the sacred place, he resolved to crush out entirely this outlandish religion, which made its devotees so stubborn and rebellious. Imagine the horror of the Jews, when with his soldiers he placed an altar to Zeus within the temple of Jehovah, and sacrificed swine's flesh upon it. More than that, he sent companies of soldiers throughout Judah, requiring all the inhabitants to sacrifice to Zeus, and to eat swine's flesh. Those who refused were put to death. It was also made a crime to keep the Sabbath, or to have in one's

possession a copy of the Law. There followed six years or more of suffering and martyrdom, very similar to the persecutions inflicted on the early Christians in the Roman Empire. It is perhaps to these Jewish martyrs, slain by Antiochus, that one verse in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews refers: "They were stoned, they were sawn a-sunder; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (of whom the world was not worthy) wandering in deserts and mountains and caves, and the holes of the earth." (Heb. 11: 37-38.)

#### GOD'S HELP FOR THE FAITHFUL. THE BOOK OF DANIEL

In the story of the New Testament we found that the Christians, in their times of persecution, were comforted by a secret book, the book of Revelation. These Jewish martyrs also had their secret book. It is preserved to us as the latter half of the book of Daniel.

It was written in the darkest period of the persecution. The author had seen his friends tortured before his eyes because they would not permit swine's flesh to be choked down their throats. He had seen mothers struck down with their babes because they insisted on bringing them up in the Jewish manner. Very likely the book itself was written in some one of the many caves, scattered through the Judean hills.

In the early part of the book, the author tells a number of old stories which had been handed down, about a certain Daniel and his three friends, Jewish captives in Babylon, in the time of Nebuchadrezzar and his successors. These men, we read, refused to eat the food which the Babylonian king set before them, and refused also to worship the Babylonian idols. They were thrown into fiery furnaces and dens of lions; but God was with them, and saved their lives; and eventually they rose to positions of honor in Babylon itself. The writer's aim in telling these stories is plain. They were well calculated to inspire the Jews of his own time to be



true to their religion in the face of all the terrible sufferings which awaited them.

The latter half of the book consists of a series of visions, in which the course of future history seems to be revealed to Daniel by angels. The vision in the seventh chapter is typical of them all. The author speaks of seeing four beasts coming up out of the sea one after another, and each devouring its predecessor. (Dan. 7:1-8.)

This vision may be interpreted as follows: The four beasts represent four great world-empires; the lion represents the Babylonian empire; the bear, the Medes; the leopard, the Persians; and the fourth, with "iron teeth," represents the Greeks under Alexander the Great. The ten horns of the fourth beast represent the successors of Alexander. The little horn, "speaking great things," represents Antiochus Epiphanes, with his proud boasts. In this part of the vision the author has thus given a bird's-eye view of history down to his own time. In the remaining verses, he portrays his hope for the future. "I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days did sit: his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and the wheels thereof burning fire. The judgment was set and the books were opened. I beheld even till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed, and it was given to be burned with fire. I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

In other words, the author believes that the Last Judgment is close at hand. Antiochus is to be slain by angels, and his body given to be burned with fire. After the Judgment, a new kingdom is to be established,

better than the kingdoms of the beasts: namely the kingdom of God. It is to include all nations and will last forever.

### THE REVOLT OF THE MACCABEANS

The author of Daniel hoped for deliverance from the oppressor through the direct intervention of Jehovah. His hopes were fulfilled, but not exactly as he had expected. In this case, as so often, God worked through human instruments.

The agents of Antiochus came one day to a town in western Judah, called Modin. Here lived an old priest, named Mattathias, with five grown sons. At the summons of the Greek officer the people had assembled. Mattathias as the leading priest in the village was called upon to officiate in a sacrifice to Zeus. He refused. One of his neighbors, no doubt fearing a massacre, stepped up to take his place. At this the old man's anger exploded, and he hewed the Jew to pieces in front of the altar, and also killed the Greek officer himself. The bold deed was the signal for a widespread revolt against Antiochus the tyrant. For some months a kind of guerrilla warfare was waged under the leadership of Mattathias. When the old priest died, his place was taken by his son Judas, one of the noblest as well as the most brilliant of all the characters in the history of ancient Israel. Army after army was sent against the little band of warriors with Judas, only to be driven back thoroughly beaten. Finally an overwhelming force invaded the land, and in the battle which followed Judas was killed. Fortunately Antiochus was already dead, and there were a number of candidates seeking his throne. A brother of Judas, named Jonathan, was able to play these rivals against each other, throwing his support first on one side and then on the other. Thus Jonathan was able to gain by skillful diplomacy even more than Judas had gained through the sword. So finally it came to pass that under still another brother,

Simon, the Jews had another opportunity to enjoy their old-time independence and freedom, which lasted until the Romans came. In these brothers, who were called the Maccabees, the spirit and genius of David lived again.

### THE BOOK OF MACCABEES

Among the Apocryphal books are two entitled First and Second Maccabees. The second of these is not of great value. First Maccabees, however, is a fine example of a Hebrew historical narrative, comparing favorably with the books of Samuel and Kings. It was written in the Hebrew language but the original Hebrew text has been lost and our English version is from the later Greek translation. The author was probably an eye-witness of many of the events which he relates. He wished his fellow-Jews to realize that God's hand was as truly to be seen in the thrilling triumphs and deliverances through which they had just passed as in those events of their nation's history, which were recorded in the older books. Some indeed might say that Judas and his brothers had worked no miracles, such as had taken place in the days of Moses and Elijah. This was true, nor did this author try to conceal it. He was exceedingly careful and accurate in his statements. He believed that his story was thrilling enough, without any exaggerations, and that the power and goodness of God were just as truly revealed in the unselfishness, modesty and faith of Judas, and in the generous, loyal co-operation of all the brothers and their helpers, as through any miracle.

The following passage is a good example of the spirit and style of the entire book:

"And he [that is, Seron, the commander of the Greek army] came near unto the pass of Bethhoron, and Judas went forth to meet him with a small company. But when they saw the army coming to meet them they said unto Judas. What!—shall we be able, few as we are, to fight against so great and strong a multitude? And

we for our part are faint, having tasted no food this day. And Judas said, It is an easy thing for many to be shut up in the hands of a few; and with heaven it is all one, to save by many or by few. For victory in battle does not depend upon the large size of the army; but strength is from heaven. Now when he had ceased speaking he sprang suddenly upon them, and Seron and his army were discomfited before him. And the fear of Judas and his brothers, and the dread of them, began to fall upon the nations round about them; and his name came even unto the king; and every nation told of the battles of Judas." (I Macc. 3: 16-26.)

In recent times there has been an awakening of interest in this great Jewish hero, Judas Maccabeus, and in this superb history of his victories. Such a book certainly deserves to be well known. Possibly the time will come when it will again be printed in our ordinary copies of the Bible, so that all may read it who wish, and gain from it a fresh inspiration to trust God in the ordinary affairs of life.

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. If the author of Daniel were to come back to earth, would he consider that the Kingdom of God had been established, or are we still under the rule of the beasts?
2. How do you think he might describe the beasts of today? Is it possible that this sign (\$) might be on their horns? Why?
3. How is the Kingdom of God to be established in place of the kingdoms of the beasts?
4. Which kind of men can help most, today, toward the establishment of that kingdom: fighters, like Judas the Maccabee, or teachers like the author of I Maccabees and the author of Daniel? Explain.

## TO SUM UP

1. In what year did the Jews come under the rule of Antiochus Epiphanes?
2. What city was this ruler's capital, and where was it located?
3. Why did he persecute the Jews?
4. What did he demand that the Jews should do?
5. When was the book of Daniel written?
6. What New Testament book is patterned after it, to some extent?
7. What was the author's purpose in telling the stories of Daniel in the lion's den, and of his three friends in the fiery furnace?

8. What is the meaning of the beasts and the horns in chapter 7, especially the "little horn speaking great things"?

9. What was the author's message to his fellow-Jews in these visions?

10. Where did the Maccabean revolt begin?

11. What parts did each of the following play in this revolt: Mattathias, Judas, Jonathan, and Simon?

12. How does I Maccabees show that God's hand was to be seen in this revolt?

13. What kind of an historical book is I Maccabees in point of accuracy?



## CHAPTER XXXVI

### THE CANON OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

#### THE TORAH

The earliest Bible of the Hebrews, that is, the earliest writings which were regarded as divinely inspired and sacred, were the written laws and legal decisions of the priests. Half-civilized nations always put their laws under the direct sanction of the gods, in order that evil-doers may be restrained by fear of supernatural vengeance. When the revised law book Deuteronomy was adopted by King Josiah and his people, in 622 B.C., it was regarded with special reverence on account of the wonderful impressiveness with which the laws were therein explained and enjoined upon the nation. In the course of the next two centuries, Deuteronomy was combined with earlier laws and also with an elaborate system of later priestly regulations. These with the historical narratives leading up to the time of Moses were finally adopted, perhaps not long after Nehemiah's time, as the accepted Torah or Law of the nation. This Torah, which includes the first five books of the Old Testament, we call the Pentateuch. To this day the orthodox Jews look upon the Torah as more sacred than any other part of the Bible.

#### THE PROPHETS

From the first also, the utterances and writings of the prophets were regarded by their followers as divinely inspired. But the prophets did not always agree among themselves. For example, when Ahab wanted advice about going to war he found four hundred

prophets who promised him success, while there was one prophet, Micaiah, who foretold disaster, and according to Micaiah, the four hundred had been inspired by a lying spirit. (I Kings 22:1-23.) A later prophet is bitter against "the prophets that make my people to err—and whoso putteth not into their mouths [that is, whoever does not give them food or money] they even prepare war against him." (Mic. 3:5.) All the great prophets such as Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah had to contend with these opposing prophets whose utterances they denounced. Who was to decide which of two prophets contradicting each other was in the right? Who, for example, was to say whether Jeremiah or his opponent Hananiah, was truly inspired of Jehovah? (Jer. 28:1-11.) On account of these frequent contradictions the people gradually became skeptical toward the claims of the prophets. It became more difficult for a new prophet to get a hearing, and by the beginning of the Greek period (333 B.C.) there were no more prophets. During that period, those who felt that God had given them something to say generally came before their fellowmen not as prophets but as wise men.

Everybody believed, however, that in former times God had spoken through prophets; and these earlier prophetic writings, including the historical narratives written by prophets, they preserved with increasing reverence. They thus had two collections in their Holy Scriptures, namely, the Law, and the Prophets. To these Jesus refers, when he says, "Think not that I came to destroy the Law and the Prophets." (Matt. 5:17.)

### THE WRITINGS

When it was no longer possible for a man to get a hearing as a prophet, that did not mean that God had ceased to speak in the hearts of men, but only that a man with a message now had to find a new way to win attention and the hearts of the people. One of these new ways,

as we have seen, was through "wisdom writings." Another was through hymns, or psalms. Another was through stories, such as Ruth and Jonah. Thus there was gradually gathered in the synagogues of Palestine and elsewhere a collection of later writings, which were regarded as inspired, but not so sacred as the Law and the Prophets. These were known simply as "the Writings." The Greek translators called them the *Hagiographa*, or sacred writings.

As to just what books should be included in this group, there was a difference of opinion. The Greek-speaking synagogues had a larger collection than those in Palestine. For example, they included the Wisdom of Solomon. In Palestine, on the other hand, there were certain scribes who objected even to Esther, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs. About 100 A.D., a council of Jewish rabbis was held in the little town of Jamnia, on the borders of Judah, to decide just what books should be included in this third collection, or in other words, just what books should be canonical. The word "canon" means literally a rule or measure. Applied to the Bible, it means the list of books which are accepted as inspired. They were guided in their decisions by the belief that all inspiration had ceased after the time of Nehemiah and Ezra. Thus they included the book of Psalms, because they supposed that it was written by David. On the same principle, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs were included because they were supposed to have been written by Solomon. The rejected books were called "genuzim," or hidden books, and the rabbis seem to have proceeded as far as possible to make them hidden in fact as well as in name by destroying all the copies they could lay their hands on.

#### THE APOCRYPHA OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Before this council of Jamnia Christianity had already come into existence and had gained a strong foothold

in the Roman Empire. The early Christians used the Greek translation of the Old Testament, with its larger collection of "Writings," and of course they were not influenced by the decision of the rabbis. They continued to use these "hidden" books. Indeed they were particularly fond of some of them, such as Ben Sira, and the Wisdom of Solomon. In time, however, the Christians discovered the difference between their Old Testament and that of the Jews. At the suggestion of the church father, Jerome (about 400 A. D.), the extra books not included in the Jewish Bible were put in a group by themselves, and called the Apocrypha, that is, "the hidden books." The Roman Catholic Church still accepts the Apocrypha as canonical. Luther wished that First Maccabees were in the canon, and Esther out of it, but the Protestant churches have almost entirely ceased to read the Apocrypha. Certain of these books, such as Tobit and Judith, are of little value, but most Bible students agree that First Maccabees, Ecclesiasticus, and the Wisdom of Solomon, seem on a far higher level of religious value than the canonical books of Esther, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes. Surely if the early Christians cherished these books, we may well do the same.

### THE NEW TESTAMENT

For many years the early Christians had no other Bible than the Greek Old Testament. After Paul's death a collection of his letters was made, and many churches procured copies, but those letters were not at that time regarded as "Scripture." Not even the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke and John were at first regarded as "Scripture." They were read in the church services, but only as a sermon by Brooks or Beecher might be read in one of our modern churches. But little by little, it became clear that these letters of Paul, and these Gospels, had a value for Christians which even the Old Testament books did not possess,

and that if the Old Testament books were inspired, surely these new books were even more truly so. Thus it came about that these Christian writings were read in the churches as "Scripture."

As in the case of the Old Testament "Writings," there was for a long time a difference of opinion as to what books should be included in the New Testament. Of the present books, the inspiration of Hebrews, Second Peter, and Revelation was for a time disputed, while on the other hand, there were a number of books in the New Testament of some of the early Christian churches, whose very names are unfamiliar to most Christians today: for example, "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," "The Shepherd of Hermas," and "The Epistle of Barnabas." Gradually, however, these latter books came to be regarded as on a lower plane of inspiration than the books which are now in the New Testament. It was believed that the age of special divine inspiration ended with the death of the apostles, and only those books which were supposed to be written by the apostles, or under their direction, were accepted as inspired. In the year 397 A.D. a church council was held at Carthage which decided what books were to be included in the New Testament. This list contained only the twenty-seven books in our modern New Testament, and in the same order. It is interesting to note, however, that even today in the orthodox Greek church the list of regular Bible lessons for public worship contains no readings from Revelation.

### THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

It is clear from the foregoing facts that the present list of Biblical books is not the result of an infallible divine selection, but in part at least is the product of fallible human judgment. Many of our present New Testament books, including some of the greatest of them, were written not by apostles but by later Christian leaders. There is no sharp dividing line between the



Old Testament Apocrypha and the so-called canonical books. It is quite clear that the spirit of God speaks through human lips and pens in all ages. Yet just as "one star differeth from another star in glory," so one book is of greater value than another, as a revelation of God. The inspiration of the Bible is not a doctrine to be proved by argument, but a spiritual fact to be recognized by the heart. The books in the Old and New Testaments were originally cared for, copied, and handed down to subsequent ages, because of the tremendous impression they made on the men of their own time; and the unique greatness of the Bible was never more universally recognized than today.



REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE SECOND AND THIRD  
QUARTERS

1. When the Old Testament historical narratives were first written, were they probably regarded as divinely inspired?

2. How did they apparently come to be included in the sacred canon?

3. In what sense do you yourself consider them inspired? Are they infallible?

4. What parts of the Old Testament might be classified as inspired fiction?

5. Which of the three main sections of the Old Testament do you consider of the highest value: the Law (that is, the Pentateuch), the Prophets, or the Writings?

6. If you were revising the list of Old Testament books, would you include any of the Apocrypha? Would you drop any of those in the present regular list?

7. Select six Old Testament books which seem to you to be in the highest rank.

8. Do you believe that the Bible is a "sufficient rule of faith and practice"?

9. How large a proportion of the Old Testament books are anonymous?

10. What can you infer from this fact, as to the spirit in which the Bible was written, and as to its religious value?

11. Make a list of the Old Testament authors whose names we positively know.

12. About what is the numerical proportion of these writers to the whole body of those who helped to write the Old Testament?

13. What does this fact indicate, as to the spirit in which the Old Testament was written, and as to its religious value?

# CHRONOLOGICAL CHART

Important Events	Stories, Histories, Apocalypses	Hymns and Songs	Wisdom Books
600 to 500 B.C.      Destruction of Jerusalem.  Temple Rebuilt.			
500 to 400 B.C.      Walls rebuilt.			
400 to 300 B.C.      Samaritan Temple.  Greek Conquest.			
300 to 200 B.C.			
200 to 100 B.C.      Persecution by Antiochus.  Maccabean Revolt.			

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### "THE BOOKS" IN A SECOND CENTURY CHURCH

#### THE BIBLE AMONG THE EARLY CHRISTIANS

The early Christians were eager Bible readers. A passage from the Bible was read at each of their religious meetings, just as in church services today. Corresponding to the large pulpit Bible of a modern church, they had a chest containing copies of the Old Testament books, and in the course of time, copies of the New Testament writings also. These at first were in the form of written rolls. They were called *Ta Biblia*, that is, "the books," and from this expression our word Bible descended.

There had to be "books" rather than one single book, because one roll could not have contained the whole of either the Old Testament or of the New, without becoming inconveniently bulky. Possibly three or four Gospels could be written on one roll, and a number of Paul's letters on another. Of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch was usually on a single roll, while the other writings were grouped in various ways. Luke tells us that when Jesus went to the synagogue at Nazareth, the attendant handed him "a book of the prophet Isaiah." It would seem that Isaiah was usually written on a roll by itself.

Sometime in the early Christian centuries the present form of book originated, with leaves and pages, and gradually displaced the older form. This was made possible by a new kind of writing material called *pergamenum* (or parchment), from the city of Pergamos where much of it was made. This new material would lie flat instead of curling up like leather, and it had no fibers to break like papyrus, and hence was well suited

for book-leaves of the new kind. It was made of the skins of animals, treated by a special process.

A book of this new kind was called a codex (plural codices). It had space for a much larger amount of written matter than the old-fashioned rolls; and this made it possible to put into a single volume all the books of the New Testament and even of the entire Bible. At first there was no universally accepted order. What we call the "General Epistles" were sometimes placed before instead of after the letters of Paul.

### THE LATIN TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE

In the earliest Christian churches, all the books in the chest were in the Greek language, but in the course of the first three or four centuries of our era, translations were made into Latin, Syriac, Ethiopic, Armenian, Coptic and Gothic. The most important of these was the Latin. If we could have visited a church in some city of the western part of the Roman empire, such as Lyons or Carthage, as early as 175 A.D., we would probably have found Latin translations of some of the Biblical books. By the year 250 A.D., it is probable that all the books in both the Old and New Testaments had been translated into Latin.

These early Latin translations were not the work of learned men, but rather of persons with little schooling. They did not know Hebrew, and not even Greek very well. This fact has left its mark on one of our common Bible terms. In the Greek version of the old Testament, they found the word *Psalmos*, which means a song with stringed instruments, but they did not know what the word meant, so simply spelled it out in the Latin form *Psalmus*, from which comes our word *Psalm*. We see that when this Latin translation was made, Christianity was a religion of the common people. The humble translators had no desire to make a show of their learning or rhetoric, although they did their work as well as they could. Their sole object was to help the lives of their fellowmen.



ANCIENT BOOK-ROLLS.





In the fourth century a revised Latin version was prepared by the Christian scholar Jerome, and a very notable piece of work it was. Into it he put all the wealth of his learning, his passionate love and veneration for the Scriptures, and his burning zeal to make the thoughts of the biblical writers clear and luminous to the men of his day. After he had finished the New Testament, and had begun work on the Old, he realized that he ought to know Hebrew, and thus be able to translate direct from the original language. So he went to Palestine, to a convent in Bethlehem, engaged a Jewish rabbi as his teacher, and learned the language. Twelve years later (394) he finished his Latin version of the Old Testament.

At first the new version was bitterly attacked. People were accustomed to the words and phrasing of the earlier versions, and resented any changes. Jerome was accused of tampering with the Word of God. He replied rather tartly and said that his critics "thought that ignorance was holiness." As a matter of fact, his final revision of the Psalms never did come into general use. Most Latin Bibles, although following Jerome's translation everywhere else, used an older version in the book of Psalms.

In later centuries, however, with this exception, Jerome's work was universally adopted. His translation (called the Vulgate) became the standard Bible of the church throughout the Middle Ages and was used in the great missionary campaigns which resulted in the Christianizing of the countries of central and western Europe.

#### BIBLE READING AMONG THE EARLY CHRISTIANS

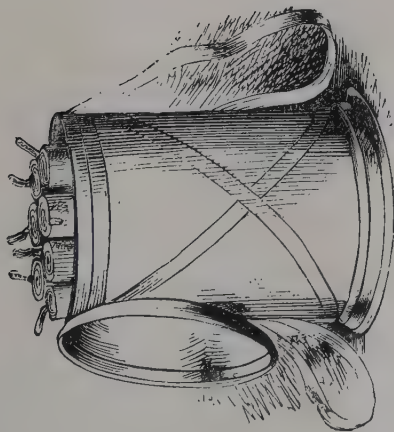
It is clear that the Bible played a large part in the lives of the early Christians. Not only was it read publicly at the weekly services; there was also a great amount of private reading by individual Christians. It seems probable that nearly every Christian owned

a copy of some or all of the biblical books. This is implied by a sentence in a letter to a young Christian from the great church leader Cyprian (250 A.D.): "Your life," he says, "should be one of earnest prayer or reading [of the Bible]; now you speaking to God, now God to you."

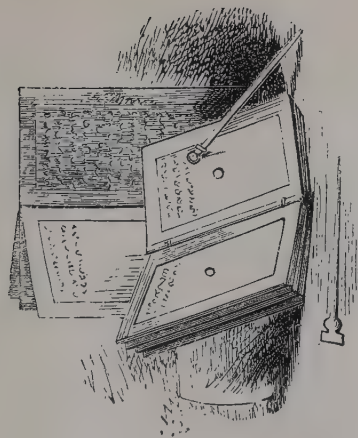
This shows that young Christians were expected to form the habit of daily Bible reading. "In fact," says a modern scholar, "the Bible pervaded the whole life of a Christian. It was the Bible, its history, its commandments, that he was taught as a child in his parents' home. When the girls gathered in the women's hall to spin, they would talk and sing about God's revelations. The prayers, in private as well as in church, were full of echoes from the Bible."

In the time of the terrible persecution under the emperor Diocletian, there was a young Christian, named Marinus, who was an officer in the Roman army, and stationed at Cæsarea in Palestine. He had performed his duties faithfully, and was about to be promoted to the rank of captain. Then out of jealousy, one of his fellow officers denounced him as a Christian. Summoned before his colonel, he was asked if this was true, and when he confessed that it was, he was given three hours' time in which to give up his faith. So he went to the small Christian church, where he found the venerable bishop. The bishop hearing his story took the Bible in one hand, and the soldier's sword in the other. "This is your choice," he said. And the soldier, without hesitating, grasped the Bible, went back and declared himself to be, and to remain, a Christian. Instead of receiving promotion and honor, he became a martyr.

Stories like this show us what the Bible meant to the early Christians. They found in it something more precious than this earthly life; the good news of a God of love, and of an incarnate Saviour, and the promise of a life everlasting.



CONTAINER FOR BOOK-ROLLS.



THE EARLY TYPE OF BOOK,  
WITH LEAVES.



### QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Mention three things which made it hard for the early Christians to read the Bible.

2. Judging from the objections to Jerome's new Latin translation, how much was the Bible read in those days?

3. What Old Testament book was most read?

4. How was reverence for the Bible the better manifested: by Jerome, or by those who found fault with his translation?

5. How did the early Christians become good Bible students?

### TO SUM UP

1. What is the derivation of our word "Bible"?

2. What new form of writing-material first made it possible to put into one volume all the biblical writings?

3. What is meant by a "codex"?

4. Into what languages was the Bible translated in the course of the first four centuries after Christ?

5. Explain the derivation of the word Psalm. In what way is this word a witness to the fact that early Christianity was a religion of the common people?

6. In preparing his translation of the Old Testament into Latin, how did Jerome show himself a painstaking, accurate scholar?

7. What was Cyprian's counsel to a young Christian regarding Bible reading?

8. Tell the story of Marinus the Christian soldier, and of his love for the Bible.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### MAKING BIBLES BY HAND

#### THE WORK OF THE SCRIBES AND MONKS

Suppose that you or I had been a member of a Christian church in the year 200 A.D. How might we have secured a copy of the Bible? Today we can go to a bookstore and buy one; but it was not so in those days. There were bookstores, to be sure. In every large Roman city there were stalls where one could buy copies of Homer, or Plato, or Virgil, laboriously written out by slaves. In large cities, it is possible that the books of Moses or Isaiah could be thus obtained. But one would have sought in vain at these stalls for a copy of Luke, or John, or the letters of Paul. Sometimes reliable scribes could be hired; but often copies of these writings had to be made by each Christian for himself, or made for him by his better educated friends, not for pay, but for pure love of the cause.

#### CHANGES IN THE COPIES

The men who made these written New Testament books were not thinking so much of future generations, as of the needs of their own generation. Their chief object was to help their fellowmen, then living, to become better Christians. Hence they sometimes introduced changes from the original wording of the books they were copying, in order to make them more helpful. If a sentence did not seem clear, an explanatory clause might be added.

In the case of the Gospel narratives we may well be glad that the earliest Christian scribes felt free to make additions to the original text. Long after the four Gospels were written, people were still alive who cherished original sayings of Jesus, and true stories about Him, which had not found a place in any of the four

Gospels, but which had been handed down by oral tradition. A few of these floating traditions or sayings were added to the manuscripts of the Gospels by copyists, as late as the second century A.D.

We find one of these additions in our Revised Version, in the marginal note to Luke 9:55. In the verses just preceding we read how the Samaritans in a certain village refused their hospitality to Jesus and His disciples, which led James and John in anger to ask Jesus to send down fire from heaven upon them and destroy them, but "Jesus turned and rebuked them." This was the end of the story as Luke wrote it. But later, probably in the second century, a Christian who was making a copy of Luke's Gospel, came to this incident in the narrative, and said to himself something like the following: "Why Luke has left out what Jesus said to the disciples. Many a time I have heard my grandfather tell this story, and he got it direct from John himself." So this Christian added on his copy two sentences said to have been spoken by Jesus to James and John on this occasion: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives but to save them." These additional sentences, in the Revised Version, are found in a marginal note below the regular text, because they were not written by Luke. Nevertheless they were probably spoken by Jesus.

Another possible saying of Jesus, which has not even found its way into the margin of our English Bible, is found in some Greek manuscripts after Luke 6:4. "On the same day, seeing one working on the Sabbath, he said to him, Man, if thou knowest what thou doest, blessed art thou; but if thou knowest not, thou art accursed and a transgressor of the law."

Still another of these later additions is the story of the woman taken in adultery to whom Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more." (John 7:53—8:11.) In the Revised Version it is printed in brackets. Without a doubt this is an authentic incident from the

life of Jesus. Yet it certainly was not an original part of the Gospel of John, nor of the other three Gospels. In many manuscripts it stands after the end of John, as an extra section all by itself. We owe a great debt of gratitude to the unknown scribe who had the insight to appreciate the value of this priceless story, and who therefore rescued it from oblivion.

### SCRIBAL ERRORS

Besides these additions, some mistakes were inevitably made in the work of copying. The human hand and the human eye are almost certain to fall into errors. Try it and see. Copy a page of this book, and correct it, then give what you have written to a friend and ask him to make a copy of it, in turn, as a part of the experiment; have him make all the corrections he wishes, comparing his work with your copy. Then compare his final draft with the original page.

Just so, mistakes crept into those old written Bibles. In most cases they were unconscious variations from the original. Words were omitted, or wrongly written. Sometimes the eye would overlook a whole sentence. Sometimes words similar in sound were mistaken for each other. When we consider that there was almost no punctuation, and no spacing between the words, we may well be surprised that there were not more such errors. It was sometimes impossible to be certain how the letters were to be read. Suppose we should write the English words "is now here" without spacing, like this: ISNOWHERE. This might easily be read: "is nowhere." It was especially difficult to copy the Hebrew script correctly, because certain of the characters were similar in form and it was hard to distinguish between them. The Hebrew words were also written with almost no vowels, and this added to the difficulty. It was like spelling TABLE as TBL, or BOAT as BT, which might also mean "bat," or "boot," or "bit."

## THE ACCURACY OF THE JEWISH COPYISTS

In time, therefore, the necessity for greater care in copying was recognized. On the one hand, the biblical books were regarded with ever-increasing reverence, while on the other hand, as the number of copies increased, the differences between them grew more and more confusing and troublesome. The Jewish scribes were remarkably successful in overcoming this danger. Sometime in the early centuries of the Christian era they agreed among themselves to take a certain copy of the Old Testament as the standard, and all others were lost or destroyed. From this one manuscript all subsequent copies were made, and with the most scrupulous care. The scribes who did this work were called Masoretes. These men counted the words and even the letters in the Old Testament, and found the middle word and the middle letter. In this way, when any manuscript was finished, they could tell whether or not there had been the slightest change from the original. Marks were introduced in the margin calling attention to any peculiarity and warning the copyist not to make a mistake. But the manuscript which they selected to copy from was itself faulty, and some of its mistakes were obvious to any reader. Even these, however, they did not venture to correct, but merely put the suggested alteration in the margin. As a result the Hebrew Bible has actually been handed down through the centuries since that time, with practically no errors or changes. In all the written Hebrew manuscripts now in existence, we search in vain for variations. To all intents and purposes it is as though they had all been struck off by a printer from the same plates.

## THE BIBLES MADE BY THE MONKS

As time went on, the Christians also saw the necessity for greater care in copying the New Testament books. Among the Christians this work came to be carried

on by monks. Aside from the Jews and the Arabs, the monasteries were the only centers of learning in the early centuries of the Middle Ages. There were practically no laymen who could read, and few clergymen. Books were scarce. To own a book was a distinction. There were even some monasteries which did not own a complete copy of the Bible. Had it not been for the monks, the New Testament might have been lost forever. We, therefore, owe them a great debt of gratitude.

Some of these monks showed wonderful skill as copyists and loving devotion to their task. Many of their manuscripts, as we examine them today, look just like printed books. We can imagine what it must have meant to write each letter, one by one, through hundreds of thousands of words, without a single careless stroke.

Some manuscripts were beautifully illuminated. The initial letters were decorated and the margins covered with paintings. One of the most beautiful of those now in existence is a portion of the translation into Gothic by Ulfilas, now preserved in Upsala, Sweden. It is written with silver letters on a purple ground.

The monks also were careful to be accurate, and made few serious mistakes, although they never worked out an elaborate system for checking mistakes as did the Massoretes, and never attained such an almost incredible degree of perfection. This was partly because they had not the requisite learning; and partly because Christianity has never been quite so much a book-religion as mediæval Judaism. The Church has kept alive her faith in the living voice of the Spirit, and hence has never been wholly dependent upon the written Word. Yet in the loving care with which they beautified their Bibles, the Christian monks showed no less devotion than did the Jews to this Book which had been their greatest inspiration.



## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. When a group of new converts came into an early Christian church, what steps were probably taken to supply them with Bibles?

2. Of two manuscripts of the Bible, which would be most read: one written in a clear, beautiful hand, or one which was slovenly in appearance?

3. Of what practical use were the pictures and decorations which the monks sometimes placed in the margins of their Bible manuscripts?

4. Of the additions to the Gospels mentioned in this chapter, which do you consider the most valuable?

5. To which of the following are we Christians today most indebted:

(a.) The early Christians who added sections to the Gospel manuscripts?

(b.) The monks who copied the New Testament?

(c.) The scribes who copied the Old Testament?

6. How else besides through copying manuscripts may the Bible message be passed on to others?



## TO SUM UP

1. How did the early Christians get copies of the books of the Bible?
2. What was the chief aim of those who copied the New Testament books, during the first two or three centuries of Christian history?
3. How did mistakes creep into these manuscripts?
4. How did the Jewish scribes secure greater accuracy?
5. What name is applied to these scribes?
6. By what class of men was the New Testament chiefly copied during the Middle Ages?
7. How did they show their love and reverence for the Bible?

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### THE BEGINNINGS OF OUR ENGLISH BIBLE

TRANSLATIONS BY BEDE, ALFRED, WYCLIF AND  
OTHERS

Not until many centuries after the latest book of the Bible was written, was there any such language as English. When Christianity was brought into England by Augustine about 600 A.D., the language spoken by the inhabitants was a Germanic dialect called Anglo-Saxon. After the establishment of Christianity in the island, a number of translations of portions of the Bible into Anglo-Saxon were made; and as modern English is descended in part from this language, we may regard these translations as forerunners of the English Bible of later centuries.

The first attempt to provide a Bible for the people of England was by a monk named Cædmon, who prepared a poetical paraphrase of the Bible story (about 700 A.D.). While this was not strictly a translation, yet to a certain extent it met the need of the people for a Bible in their native tongue. There was perhaps no one in the country at that time, who was well enough educated to make an exact translation.

In the course of the next hundred years after Cædmon, there lived another monk, named Bede, generally called the Venerable Bede. This man was really a great scholar for those days. He wrote an Ecclesiastical History of England of which copies are still in existence, and to which we owe most of our knowledge of early England. Before his last illness, this man undertook to translate the Gospel of John. His disciple Cuthbert in a letter to a fellow-student has left an account of how the work was finished. "On the Tuesday before Ascension Day, though suffering greatly, he con-

tinued to dictate cheerfully to his scribes, saying now and again, 'Go on quickly, I know not how long I shall hold out, and whether my Maker may not soon take me away.' On the morrow he resumed his task. One of the scholars said to him, 'Most dear master, there is still one chapter wanting; do you think it troublesome to be asked any more questions?' But he answered, 'It is no trouble; take up your pen and write quickly.' Soon afterwards the student said, 'It is written now.' The dying man answered, 'It is well, you have said the truth. It is finished.' And so, shortly afterward, "he breathed his last and departed to the heavenly kingdom."

Another important translator was King Alfred, who died about 900 A.D. As a part of the preface to his code of laws, he translated the Ten Commandments, and the greater part of Exodus 21-23. It is also said that at the time of his death he was engaged on a translation of the book of Psalms.

There still exist manuscripts of the Psalms and the Gospels in Anglo-Saxon, by different translators. No doubt each one of them represents scores, or even hundreds, of similar copies which were in circulation when Anglo-Saxon was still a living tongue. We thus see that more than a thousand years ago the Bible already exercised a real and mighty influence in England.

#### THE BIRTH OF A NEW BIBLE LANGUAGE

In the year 1066 England was conquered by William of Normandy and his nobles, and the old Anglo-Saxon population was reduced to serfdom. For the next century or more, there were two languages spoken in England. The rich and powerful nobles spoke Norman-French, and the peasants spoke Anglo-Saxon.

Two or three centuries later, or about 1300, there began an era of wonderful opportunity for the lower classes in England. One cause for this was a war between England and France. In this war the English foot soldiers, who

were recruited from the serfs, were armed with cross-bows, and proved themselves more than a match for the French knights on horseback. This increased their power and importance and compelled the English nobles to make common cause with them. There was also much general discontent in England, during this period, on account of the extortionate demands of the church dignitaries who at that time were luxury-loving and corrupt. Nobles and common people were at one in resisting this ecclesiastical oppression.

Finally, in the course of this century, there was a series of dreadful epidemics which swept away nearly half the population. The result was that labor was scarce, and wages high. The working classes developed a higher standard of living, and a larger degree of self-respect. In this they were bitterly opposed by the nobles, who tried in vain to keep down wages by law. The working classes in turn went on strikes, just like the strikes of today. In the year 1381 there was a great uprising of the peasants, and an army of more than a hundred thousand, under the leadership of a certain Wat Tyler, marched into London to present their demands to the king. It was at this time that the expression was coined:

When Adam delved, and Eve span,  
Who was then the gentleman?

Unfortunately, many acts of violence were committed by the peasants, such as the burning of the archbishop's palace in London. This turned public sentiment against them. Wat Tyler's revolution was put down with great cruelty. Nevertheless, the general level of the entire working population had been raised by these various causes, and there was less difference between living conditions of the lower and upper classes. Gradually, the nobles and the peasants, the rich and the poor, were welded into a single nation. The two languages, Norman-French and Anglo-Saxon, were gradually blended

into a new language, English, which, in its grace and homely strength, is a characteristic product of this great movement toward equality, democracy and brotherhood. Such a language was particularly well adapted to become a vehicle of the message of the Bible, the people's Book.

### A NEW INTEREST IN THE BIBLE

During the years immediately after the Norman conquest there was little Bible reading in England, and no further progress in translating the Bible. The Anglo-Saxon peasants were kept in ignorance, and few of them could read even those translations which had already been made for them. As for the nobles, they used the Latin translation in so far as they read the Bible at all. When a better day began to dawn for the common people, however, we can trace a new interest in the Bible, and the Bible in turn, inspired a greater devotion to the people's cause, for it is the great Magna Charta of democracy. About 1325 the Psalms were translated into the English of that day by a certain Richard Rolle. But the great Bible translator of the age was John Wyclif.

### JOHN WYCLIF AS A RELIGIOUS LEADER

Wyclif was born about 1320 in the north of England. He became a minister, and a professor in the University of Oxford. He first rose to prominence in a contest over the question of ecclesiastical taxes between the English parliament and the Pope, who had presented a bill for back taxes for thirty-three years. Parliament refused to pay, and Wyclif wrote a tract defending its action.

In this contest Wyclif's eyes were opened to the immoral practices and superstitious teachings of the Roman Catholic Church of that day, and he began to expose them. When summoned to a trial for heresy, however, he had the protection of the great nobles whom he had



encouraged to resist the demands for money made by the Roman Catholic Church.

But Wyclif was not only opposed to extortionate church officials; he hated extortion and oppression of every kind. He saw that, although many of the church leaders were corrupt and selfish, yet the Bible really taught justice and love and brotherhood. So he boldly championed the peasants in their struggle for higher wages. More than that, he organized a band of disciples, who were called "Poor Priests," who went about from village to village, teaching these doctrines wherever the people could be gathered together to listen. These men brought a new moral impulse into the life of the English people, which became the foundation for England's future greatness. In order to help them in their work, Wyclif, in his old age, decided to translate the entire Bible into English.

#### WYCLIF'S TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE

Although Wyclif was the leader in this work of translation he did not do all of it himself. Nearly all of the Old Testament was translated by one of his friends, Nicholas of Hereford. The original manuscript of this scholar is still in existence, and it is interesting to note that it breaks off abruptly in the middle of a verse in one of the apocryphal books (Baruch). It is almost certain that just when Nicholas was writing this verse, officers came to arrest him on charges of heresy. After Wyclif's death (1384) the entire work was carefully and skillfully revised by another friend and comrade, John Purvey.

The translation as a whole was a remarkable achievement. It was based on the Latin version, not on the original Greek and Hebrew, for in those days these two languages were practically unknown in Europe. Wyclif and his friends were good Latin scholars, however, and they made a faithful translation from the Latin version. The English wording is clear and forcible. Although



five centuries have passed away, much of it can still be read and understood. Its quaint phrases often bring home the meaning of a Bible sentence with fresh and appealing force. As an example we may quote the opening verses of the Beatitudes in this version.

"And Jhesus, seyinge the puple, wente up in to an hil, and whanne he was set, hise disciples camen to hym. And he openyde his mouth and tauzte hem and saide, Blessed ben pore men in spirit, for the kyngdom of heuenes is herne." Many of the fine expressions in Wyclif's version were copied by later translators, and some of them are embedded in the Authorized Version, for example, "a well of water springing up into eternal life; compass sea and land; the beam and the mote; the deep things of God; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

The spirit in which this group of men carried on their work is well expressed in John Purvey's preface to his revision. The translator, he says, "hath need to live a clene life, and be full devout in prayers, and have not his wit occupied about worldly things, that the Holy Spirit, author of wisdom and knowledge and truth, dress him in his work, and suffer him not for to err. By this manner, with good living and great travail men may come to true and clear translating and true understanding of Holy Writ, seem it never so hard at the beginning. God grant to us all, grace to ken well and keep well, and suffer joyfully some pain for it at the last."

Wyclif's translation aroused a storm of criticism among the church leaders of that day. The authorities passed a law that no one should read it either in public or in private "under pain of excommunication." Wyclif himself wrote, before his death: "Many think it amiss that men should know Christ's life, for then priests should be shamed of their lives, and specially these high priests, for they contradict Christ both in word and deed." Both Hereford and Purvey were imprisoned and Hereford was tortured. Wyclif was too influential to

be molested, but some forty years after his death, his bones were dug up and burned, and the ashes thrown into the brook called the Swift, which flows by his home town Lutterworth.

Despite all this opposition, however, the new English Bible exerted a great influence. Copies could only be made by hand, as the printing-press had not yet been invented. There are still in existence one hundred and seventy partial or complete copies of this translation. People used to gather at night to hear it read. One historian tells us that as much as a load of hay was at times given for a few chapters of an epistle of Paul. Through the reading of the Bible thus made possible the people were prepared for the great Protestant Reformation, a century and a half later.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. What characteristics of the English language made it a good Bible language?

2. What characteristics in the following men, as they are described in this chapter, made them good Bible translators?

(a.) Bede.

(b.) Alfred.

(c.) Wyclif.

(d.) Hereford.

(e.) Purvey.

3. What qualities are necessary in any one who would transmit the truth of the Gospel to others either through deed or word?

TO SUM UP

1. What language was spoken in England, when Christianity was brought there by Augustine and his fellow missionaries?

2. What was "Cædmon's paraphrase"?

3. What book of the New Testament was translated by Bede?

4. Tell the story of the completion of Bede's translation of John.

5. What parts of the Bible were translated by King Alfred?

6. What two languages were blended to form the English language?

7. What historical events led up to this blending?

8. To what extent was English the language of the common people, from the very beginning?

9. How did John Wyclif become a religious and social reformer?

10. What was his purpose in translating the Bible?

11. Mention some characteristics of Wyclif's translation.

12. Who helped him prepare it?

13. How was it received by the nobles? By the common people?

## CHAPTER XL

### A NEW ERA OF TRIUMPH FOR THE BIBLE

#### THE PRINTING-PRESS AND THE REFORMATION

About fifty years after Wyclif's death there lived in Strassburg, in Germany, a silversmith, named Johann Gutenberg, who takes high rank among the benefactors of mankind. He it was who invented the art of printing.

Even before Gutenberg's time men had been feeling their way toward this invention. Small picture books had been made, called block-books, each page having been printed from a single block of wood. Among these "block-books" were some called "Bibles of the poor," with a Scripture text on each page, and a picture to illustrate it. Gutenberg improved on this device by introducing small movable engravings of single letters, called types. In making them, he experimented first with wood; but these were soon broken or split, and metal ones were substituted. The first printing-press in the world was set up by Gutenberg, in his native city Mayence, about the year 1450.

It is an eloquent testimony to the general interest in the Bible in those days that the first book of any length which the inventor undertook to publish was a Latin Bible. The work was begun in 1453 and was finished four years later. About one hundred copies were printed of which thirty-one are still known to be in existence. It was a very beautiful and costly piece of work.

The new invention aroused great interest. Presses were quickly set up in many cities, not only in Germany, but in other countries. Venice became famous for its printers. Before 1500, or within fifty years after Gutenberg's first Bible was published, ninety-two other editions of the Bible were printed, including both the Latin and other versions.

## LINEN PAPER

The earliest printed books were very expensive. Only princes or rich merchants could afford to buy them. The chief expense was the material out of which the books were made. But there was a remedy for this difficulty, for some centuries earlier the Arabs had learned from the Chinese the art of making paper by soaking linen rags in water and acid. When Gutenberg set up his press, the only paper available was a kind of imitation parchment, very costly. Part of his first edition of the Bible was printed on paper, and the rest on parchment, and the paper copies were quite as beautiful as the others. But with printing-presses now springing up in every important city, there was a demand for less expensive paper, which was quickly met, and within a few decades printed books could be sold almost as cheaply as today.

## THE INFLUENCE OF THE PRINTING-PRESS

With a supply of inexpensive paper at hand, there was thus perfected a mighty engine for the dissemination of knowledge and ideas. The importance of this new factor in civilization was almost inconceivably great. It was as though there had been placed at the disposal of any man with a message for his fellowmen a megaphone which would carry his voice to the very ends of the earth; and it was not long before the thinkers and leaders of those days awoke to their opportunity. There was a sudden outpouring of pamphlets on various subjects of public interest. For example, in the year 1518 there were published 150 books and pamphlets in the German language. Six years later, in 1524, there were published 990 German works of various kinds. The special cause for all these new books at just this time was the outbreak of the Protestant Reformation. No doubt in other countries also, there was a similar rapid increase at this time in the number of printed publications.



Since those days there has been a steady and at times almost magical improvement in the process of printing. Great presses driven by steam or electricity have taken the place of the old hand-power machines. The total volume of printed matter which is now turned out annually is beyond computation. It is the Bible, however, whose circulation has been most increased by the invention of printing. Not only was the Bible the first printed book but it has always been the most frequently printed book, and remains today the one "best seller." The British and Foreign Bible Society alone issues a million Bibles yearly.

#### THE RESURRECTION OF THE GREEK TESTAMENT

In pictures of the famous statue of Moses by Michelangelo, one notices that the great lawgiver is represented as having horns springing from above his forehead. This strange fact is due to a mistaken translation of Ex. 34:35, in the Latin version by Jerome. Instead of "Moses' face shone," Jerome understood the Hebrew to mean, "Moses' face was horned." There were many such errors in the Latin version, both in the Old Testament and in the New, and these errors were of course perpetuated in translations made from the Latin, such as Wyclif's. Now Wyclif and his colleagues knew well enough that the Latin version from which they translated was itself a translation from the original languages in which the Bible was written. No doubt they would have given much for a manuscript of the Greek New Testament. But there probably was not a single copy in England. Moreover, no one understood the Greek language, nor was there such a thing as a Greek grammar or lexicon, in all western Europe.

But in this department of human learning too, a new era was at hand. In 1453, or the very year that Gutenberg began to set the type for the first printed edition of the Latin Bible, the Turks captured the city of Constantinople. In this city the knowledge of Greek had been cherished

through the centuries, although neglected in other parts of Europe. With the coming of the Turks, the learned monks hastily gathered up their manuscripts, including copies of the New Testament in Greek, and fled to Italy. Here they awakened a new interest in Greek literature, which rapidly spread to other countries. This movement is called "the new learning," or the Renaissance.

Among the centers of the new learning was Oxford University, in England. A little group of scholars gathered there who were especially interested in the Greek New Testament. As they read the story of Jesus and the letters of Paul in the freshness and force of the original language, the meaning came home to them like a new revelation, which they longed to impart to others. One of these men, a young German named Erasmus, published in his own country in the year 1516, a printed edition of the Greek New Testament, with a new and more accurate Latin translation in parallel columns. Thousands of copies of this book were quickly sold, and a new interest in the Bible was awakened among educated men. There were indeed many who resented any suggestion that the Latin version was not perfect. Some in their ignorance even went so far as to say that the Greek and Hebrew languages were inventions of heretics! When an edition of the Old Testament was published with the Hebrew in one column, the Greek in another and the Latin in the middle, it was said that the true version of the Bible had been crucified, like our Lord, between two thieves.

In spite of all opposition there was an increasing number of men who studied Greek and Hebrew, and the way was thus prepared for new and more accurate translations of the Bible into the modern languages of Europe, including English.

### THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

Throughout the Middle Ages, the people of Europe had been under a rigid ecclesiastical tyranny. Freedom

of religious opinion was unknown. To be a "Wycliffite" or any other kind of a so-called heretic meant severe persecution, if not death. Not only were men forbidden to think for themselves, they were not even allowed to read the Bible for themselves. Pope Innocent was asked by a bishop what to do with associations of Bible readers in his diocese. He replied (1199) that of course the study of the Bible was to be encouraged among the clergy but that all laymen were to be kept from it, the Bible being so profound in its mysteries that even scholars sometimes get beyond their depth and are drowned. He compares the Bible to the sacred mountain, Sinai, and quotes the words of Moses (Exodus 19:12-13), "Take heed to yourselves that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it. Whosoever toucheth the mount shall be stoned or shot through." Likewise, the Pope said, "If a layman touches the Bible he is guilty of sacrilege and should be stoned or shot through."

As time went on, however, thinking men grew restive under these restrictions. Such men also became disgusted with some of the superstitious doctrines which were taught. But what set the great mass of the common people against the Roman Church was the corruption and immorality of the ecclesiastical officials. The priests and prelates, great and small, seemed to care for nothing but money. One of the worst scandals was the selling of indulgences for money, that is, pardons for sins not yet committed, or in other words, permission to commit these sins. Discontent with such practices grew more and more widespread and intense. All that was needed was a leader around which a reform movement could crystallize.

The leader appeared on the scene in 1517, when a monk named Martin Luther, a professor in the little University of Wittenberg, denounced the sale of indulgences. Much to Luther's own astonishment, the news of his action spread like wildfire all over Europe. Within a few years nearly all the independent kingdoms of northern

Germany had revolted from Rome, and had set up an independent church organization. Other countries, including England, soon followed Germany's example and were known as Protestant countries.

One important result of this great religious revolution was a gradual increase in personal religious liberty. Entire religious liberty did not come all at once. Heretics were still burned by Protestants as well as by the Catholics; yet northern Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, did become a haven of refuge to many a fearless and outspoken reformer from other countries of Europe. In all Protestant countries and eventually in Roman Catholic lands also, permission was granted to the common people to read translations of the Bible. Thus the Bible was set free by the Protestant Reformation, and itself became one of the most powerful forces working for a higher degree of human liberty and equality.

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

Consider the following as subjects for debates, and jot down notes for arguments on each side.

1. Resolved that the invention of the printing-press did more harm than good.

Affirmative

Negative

2. Resolved that the publication of the Greek New Testament by Erasmus did more harm than good.

Affirmative

Negative

3. Resolved that laymen should not be allowed to read the Bible.

Affirmative

Negative

## TO SUM UP

1. Who invented the art of printing from movable types?
2. When and where was the first printing-press set up?
3. What book was the first one printed?
4. What other invention increased the usefulness of the printing-press?

5. What was the influence of the printing-press on civilization?
6. How has the printing-press increased the influence of the Bible?
7. How were the errors of the Latin Bible brought to light during the fifteenth century?
8. How did the great German scholar Erasmus awaken fresh interest in the New Testament?
9. Why did some persons denounce him?
10. Why did the Church formerly forbid the reading of the Bible by laymen?
11. How was the Bible set free by the Protestant Reformation?



## CHAPTER XLI

### THE BIBLE FOR THE GERMAN PEOPLE

#### LUTHER'S TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE

The period of the Reformation not only set the common people free to read the Bible, but it also aroused everywhere a new and intense interest in the Bible. The air was full of questions about religion, and all thinking persons were eager to find out for themselves what the Bible taught in regard to the disputed points. When we consider this general interest, and also the revival of Greek and Hebrew scholarship which had already begun, we are not surprised that this period of history was remarkable, among other things, for its translations of the Bible into the various languages of Europe, as for example, English, French, Italian, German and Swedish.

#### EARLY CONTINENTAL TRANSLATIONS

Long before the period of the Reformation, the Bible was translated somewhat imperfectly into certain languages of continental Europe, as well as into English. Among the leaders in this work were those groups of Christians known as the Waldenses. In the year 1176 there was living in the city of Lyons, France, a rich merchant known as Peter Waldo. One Sunday he heard a minstrel in the street singing a poem about a certain Saint Alexis, who had given up his property and had thus found peace. The song struck a responsive chord within him, for he himself was longing for peace of heart; and he sought out two priests who agreed to translate the Gospels for him into the language of the south of France. Reading these Gospels, he came to the story of the rich young ruler to whom Jesus said, "Go, sell all that thou hast and come follow me." As he read, he thought about the

rich and powerful church officials of his day, who lived in luxury, and who were supposed to be Christ's representatives. Were they Christians in any true sense of the word? It seemed to him that the so-called Christian church had almost wholly forgotten the true meaning of Christianity, and he determined that he himself would take Christ's words literally. So he distributed all his property among the poor, and henceforth supported himself by his labor from day to day, at the same time preaching his ideas to all who would listen. In a very short time, he was joined by others in this new way of life. They were known as the Poor Men of Lyons. "They are orderly and modest in their manners," says a writer of that time "and their dress is neither expensive nor mean. They use no oaths, falsehoods, or frauds. They live on what they can earn by the labor of their hands from day to day. Even shoemakers are teachers among them. They are contented with the bare necessities of life. They are also chaste. They are never found hanging about wineshops."

Many of these people traveled from town to town, and although forbidden by the church authorities, gathered groups of hearers together and explained the Scriptures. The movement spread very rapidly, although it was condemned as heretical, and was persecuted. Organizations of similar "poor men" sprang into existence in various parts of France, and also in Italy and Germany. Everywhere, they urged people to read the Bible for themselves. To encourage such reading, they translated the Gospels and other biblical books into a number of languages, including Bohemian and German. In time, translations were made of the entire Bible. Soon after the invention of printing, a number of editions of the Bible in German were published. These early translations were very faulty. The translators were like those early Christians who first translated the New Testament into Latin, not learned scholars, but humble, consecrated men with little education. They did not

know Latin very well. For example, they did not recognize Tertius as a proper name, and translated it "the third." Nor were they skillful in expressing the ideas of the Bible in their own language. Their sentences were often awkward, and sometimes did not make sense. Such translations were not easy to read. Nevertheless they exerted an important influence, preparing the way for the Reformation.

#### AN ENFORCED VACATION PUT TO GOOD USE

The first and in some respects the greatest of the Bible translations of the Reformation era, was that by Luther himself into the German language. It is of special interest to us, as it was one of the forerunners of our English Bible. That Luther was led to give his attention to this matter was due in part to a turn in his fortunes which compelled him to retire for a time from his busy life as a teacher and a public leader. He had been summoned from his home in Wittenberg (in the year 1521) to appear before the Imperial Diet in the city of Wurms, to answer the charge of heresy. All the world knows how this peasant-born monk stood up before the Emperor and all his princes, and refused to take back a single syllable: "Here I stand. God helping me I cannot do otherwise."

He had been granted a safe-conduct by the Emperor, and so was allowed to set out for home. He was now a condemned heretic, however, and his life was in dire peril. By the edict of the Diet, no one was to receive him or feed him. Wherever he might be found, he was to be seized and handed over to the Emperor. Hitherto, he had been protected by his friend the Elector Frederick, in whose province Wittenberg was situated. Now, however, even the good Elector dared not defy openly the Imperial decree. So by a plan which had been explained to Luther beforehand, the carriage in which he was traveling homeward was stopped by armed horsemen in a lonely forest, and Luther himself was taken

to one of Frederick's castles, the Wartburg. Here he remained safely hidden for nearly a year, only a few of his intimate friends knowing of his whereabouts. It was widely believed that he had been made away with by his enemies.

Although he was in the hands of friends and surrounded by every comfort, this was not an agreeable experience for Luther. He was an exceedingly active man, and sitting around all day with nothing to do was not at all to his taste. Indeed his health suffered from the lack of exercise, along with much rich food. Only one occupation was left to him, namely the study of the Scriptures; and in the autumn of 1521 it occurred to him that a new translation of the Bible into German was greatly needed. Immediately he set about the task, and with such impetuous energy did he work, that within three months he finished the New Testament. This was published in September, 1522, after his return to Wittenberg.

#### AT WORK ON THE OLD TESTAMENT

Immediately after finishing the New Testament, Luther continued with the Old, but this of course even with the help of associates, required more time, especially as he was now back in active life again. In certain of his letters Luther tells of the difficulties which he and his friends encountered in translating from the Hebrew. "It has often happened," he says in one letter, "that we have sought a fortnight, or three or four weeks, for a single word."

And again he writes, "I am now at work translating the prophets. Good Heavens! How hard it is to make the Hebrew writers speak German! They withstand our efforts, not wishing to give up their native tongue for a barbarous idiom, just as a nightingale would not change her sweet song to imitate the cuckoo."

In still another letter, he speaks of his work on the book of Job. "We have so much trouble translating Job, on account of the grandeur of his style, that he seems

to be much more impatient of our efforts to turn him into German, than he was of the consolations of his friends." Finally the work was finished, and the whole German Bible in the new translation was published in 1534.

### THE INFLUENCE OF LUTHER'S TRANSLATION

Within fifty years after the first edition of Luther's version of the entire Bible, more than 100,000 copies were sold, Luther himself never taking a penny for this work. The following remark by one of Luther's opponents, Cochläus, soon after the publication of the New Testament, shows what an enormous influence it immediately wielded: "Luther's New Testament was multiplied by the printers in a most wonderful way, so that even shoemakers and women, and every and any lay person acquainted with the German type read it greedily as the fountain of all truth, and by repeatedly reading it impressed it on their memory. By this means they acquired in a few months so much knowledge that they ventured to dispute not only with Catholic laymen, but even with masters and doctors of theology about faith and the Gospel."

Luther was well qualified for this task of translation. He had received a thorough education at the University of Erfurt, and after his graduation he had gone on with his study, taking up both Hebrew and Greek. Naturally he translated the Bible from the original languages instead of from the Latin with its many errors.

Besides being accurate, Luther's translation was a fine example of forcible and beautiful German. He did not merely transpose the original words into German words, but he sought rather to express the thought of each sentence, as it would naturally be expressed by Germans themselves. One secret of his success in the use of the German language, is revealed by his own statement, as follows: "You must get your German," he declares, "not from the Latin, but from the mother in



the home, the child in the street, and the common man in the market-place."

Luther's greatest qualification as a translator was his inner sympathy with the biblical writers, and his deep spiritual understanding of the great ideas of Christianity. As he himself says, "Translating is not everybody's gift. It demands a genuinely pious, true industrious, reverent heart."

Luther's Bible became at once the Bible of the German people, and has continued so to the present day. Indeed the present German language is in part the product of Luther's translation. Before his time there were a great number of dialects, so that sometimes even persons from districts only a few miles apart, could scarcely understand one another. But when the new translation was scattered into every German household, its language became the standard, and the dialects gradually disappeared. To what extent Luther's Bible has inspired the spiritual greatness of the German people, as revealed in the past four centuries by such men as Schiller and Goethe, of course no one can measure.



### QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Which is the more essential, book learning or character? Illustrate from the early history of the Waldenses.

2. Why did Luther's translation of the Bible have a great sale, while earlier German translations, even in printed editions, were known only to a few?

3. How had Luther prepared himself for the work of translation?

4. What can you infer as to Luther's character from the fact that he mastered Hebrew and Greek, in an age when few persons, even clergymen, had any acquaintance with them?

### TO SUM UP

1. Why was there a demand for translations of the Bible in the period of the Reformation?

2. Who were among the early leaders in the work of translating the Bible into the languages of Europe?

3. Tell about Peter Waldo, and how he came to start a new religious organization.

4. Briefly describe the early translations of the Bible into German and other European languages. What were their defects?

5. How did it happen that Luther was able to give his attention to Bible translation?

6. What does he say about the difficulty of translating the Old Testament into German?

7. What were some of the good qualities of Luther's translation?

8. What influence did it exert?

## CHAPTER XLII

### THE FATHER OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE

#### THE WORK OF WILLIAM TYNDALE

It has been well said that the father of the English Bible, as we now have it, was William Tyndale. Our Authorized and Revised Versions bear the mark of his genius, more than of any other single man. Few other names in history are so closely identified with the Bible. His whole life-work was the translation of the Bible.

About Tyndale's early life we know little. He was born about 1490. As a young man he studied in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and gained a good reputation as a scholar. While he was still in Cambridge there fell into his hands a copy of the new Greek Testament by Erasmus. This was the turning-point of his life. As he read this volume the conviction was burned deeply into his heart that the religion of the church of those days had fallen very far from the religion of Jesus and His apostles. Soon afterwards came the news of Luther's revolt against Rome. Tyndale's heart was with Luther, and he longed to help the cause of a purer Christianity in his own country. In the preface to the New Testament of Erasmus he found a suggestion as to what he might do. "I wish," said Erasmus, "that even the weakest woman should read the Gospels — should read the Epistles of Paul: and I wish that they were translated into all languages, so that they might be read and understood not only by Scots and Irishmen, but also by Turks and Saracens. I long that the husbandman should sing portions of them to himself as he follows the plow, that the weaver should hum them to the tune of his shuttle, that the traveler should beguile with their stories the tedium of his journey." It is probable also that Luther's translation into German stirred Tyndale with a desire to render the same service to his own people.

At any rate, he determined to translate the Bible into English, and to circulate printed copies in every palace and cottage in England. There was already in existence the English translation by Wyclif, but the language had greatly changed since Wyclif's time; and besides that, the time had come for a new and more accurate translation not from the Latin but from the original languages. Tyndale felt himself the man to do the work. It was probably about this time that there occurred his famous dispute with a so-called "learned man" in his native county, about the authority of the Pope; in which he said: "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plow to know more of the Scripture than thou dost." We shall see how well he made good his promise.

#### THE FIRST PRINTED ENGLISH NEW TESTAMENT

While still a young man of about thirty, Tyndale went to London, in the hope of interesting Bishop Tunstall of that city in his undertaking. He needed some means of support while he worked. The Bishop was a friend of Erasmus; but he had been greatly disturbed by Luther's agitation, and he was instinctively hostile to any project which might stir up a similar revolt in England. So he told Tyndale that "his house was full"; that is, he could not pay him a salary. The young scholar nevertheless found friends in London, including a certain Humphrey Munmouth, and other well-to-do merchants who backed him with funds. After about six months in London, however, Tyndale realized that if he should ever succeed in giving the Bible to the English people, it would only be in the teeth of the fiercest opposition on the part of the authorities. He perceived that "not only was there no rowme in my Lord of London's palace to translate the New Testament, but also that there was no place to do it in all Englonde." So in 1524 he went from England to Germany, where he found pro-

tection among the Lutherans. He perhaps visited Luther himself at Wittenberg. From this time on he lived an exile's life, nor did he ever again set foot upon his native soil.

For a time he found a home in Hamburg, where he finished the New Testament. The next year he went to Cologne and made arrangements with a printer in that city, named Peter Quentel, for the publication of his manuscript. When the work was about half finished, Luther's opponent Cochläus discovered what was going on. He had overheard some of the workmen from the printing establishment boasting of the revolution which would soon be accomplished in England through a book which they were printing. Inviting the men to his house he plied them with wine, and finally drew from them the information he wanted. Fortunately, before the authorities could do anything Tyndale was warned, and taking the unbound sheets which had already been printed he fled to Wurts which at that time was one of the leading centers of the Reformation. Here, where six years before Luther had defied both Pope and Emperor, Tyndale brought out two editions of his English New Testament (1525). One was a large quarto book, the other smaller. About 3000 copies of each were printed. These were quickly smuggled into England hidden, it is said, in bales of cloth, and many of them were at once bought up and distributed.

The English authorities had been on the lookout for these books. Cochläus and others had written to King Henry the Eighth warning him of the awful danger to which his realm was exposed, and urged him "to prevent the importation of the pernicious merchandise." When it was discovered that a large number of copies had been smuggled in, a great outcry was made. Bishop Tunstall preached against the new translation, saying that it contained no less than 3000 errors; and copies of it were publicly burned. Of the two editions, or 6000 books in all, only one copy of each remains, and these are imper-

fect, so determined and fierce was the campaign of destruction directed against them.

All this furious opposition however was like an attempt to hold back the tide or to keep the sun from rising. The futility of it is shown by an amusing incident. A certain London merchant named Packyngton went to Bishop Tunstall and offered to buy for him all the unsold copies of the new translation. The Bishop eagerly accepted the offer, and Packyngton did indeed secure a large number of the books and charged the Bishop a good round sum for them. This money he immediately turned over to Tyndale to be used for printing a new edition. "And so," declares the old chronicler who tells the story, "the Bishop had the bokes, Packyngton had the thankes and Tyndale had the money." Of course new editions were immediately published. Within three or four years, as many as fifteen thousand copies were sent to England.

#### AT WORK ON THE OLD TESTAMENT

Immediately after finishing the New Testament Tyndale set to work to translate the Old Testament. In 1530 he published an English version of the Pentateuch, and the following year the book of Jonah. By this time, however, the clouds of persecution were gathering deeply about him. He had made many enemies especially among the church leaders, not only by translating the Bible, but also by his own keen and forcible comments on Bible passages. Many of these comments were directed against the Roman Catholic Church of that day. As examples of his skill as a reform writer we may quote the following marginal notes from his translation of the Pentateuch.

Opposite Ex. 34: 20, which reads, "None shall come before me empty," Tyndale wrote, "that is a good text for the Pope." He meant that the Pope and the other church leaders were always asking the people for money, and cared for nothing else. He makes the same point,



in his comment opposite Ex. 36:6, where it reads that the people brought too many gifts for the new tabernacle, and were told not to bring anything more. "When," asks Tyndale, "will the Pope say, Hoo [that is, hold, or stop]. When will our spiritualitie [that is, church leaders] say, Hoo? Never, verily, until they have all."

Such thrusts as these made many a selfish Bishop wince. The authorities in England left no stone unturned to get him back into their power. In Germany, also, the enemies of the Reformation joined in the hunt. Attempts were made to seize him at Wurms. For a time he found protection under another Lutheran prince, Philip of Hesse, at Marburg. Later we find him at Antwerp in Belgium. Thus he was driven like a wild beast from one hiding place to another. To use his own words, he suffered "poverty, exile, bitter absence from friends, hunger and thirst and cold, great dangers, and other hard and sharp fightings." Finally in May, 1535, he was betrayed by one in whom he had trusted and was thrown into prison at Vilvorde near Brussels. A touching letter has been preserved which he wrote in the prison to the governor of the city sometime during the winter after his arrest. He begs the governor to procure from his goods "a warmer cap, for I suffer extremely from cold in the head, being afflicted with a perpetual catarrh which is considerably increased in this cell; a warmer coat also, for that which I have is very thin; also a piece of cloth to patch my leggins. My overcoat is worn out. My shirts are also worn out. . . . I wish also permission to have a lamp in the evening, for it is wearisome to sit alone in the dark. But above all I entreat and beseech your clemency . . . to permit me to have my Hebrew Bible, Hebrew grammar, and Hebrew dictionary, that I may spend my time with that study."

It is probable that this request for his books was granted, and let us hope that warmer clothes were provided for him also. At any rate, he seems to have finished while in prison his translation of the historical books



from Joshua through II Chronicles. Before he could carry the Old Testament to completion, however, he was tried and condemned as a heretic, and on October 6, 1536, he was put to death by strangling. His last words were, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes."

### THE INFLUENCE OF TYNDALE'S VERSION

Although Tyndale himself thus died a martyr and in exile, few men have ever been more gloriously victorious in life's battle. Tyndale's translation has been the dominating influence in all the leading English versions from that day to this. "It is substantially the Bible," says the historian Froude, "with which we are all familiar. The peculiar genius — if such a word be permitted — the mingled tenderness and majesty — the preternatural grandeur — unequalled, unapproached in the attempted improvements of modern scholars — all are here and bear the impress of the mind of one man — William Tyndale."

The following selection from Tyndale's translation (of Matthew 6:24-25) shows how little it has been changed in later versions:

"No man can serve two masters. For either he shall hate the one and love the other, or else he shall lean to the one and despise that other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, be not careful for your life, what ye shall eat, nor what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body what raiment ye shall wear. Is not the life more worth than meat, and the body more of value than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air. For they sow not, neither reap, nor yet carry into the barnes; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye better than they?"

A striking evidence of the value of Tyndale's translation is the fact that the English and American revisions have in many cases gone back to it in preference to the King James Version. One example is in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, where both Tyndale and

the Revised Versions read "love," rather than "charity" as in the King James Version.

The honesty and unselfish humility which Tyndale showed in all his work is well expressed in the following quotation from his letters: "I call God to record," he writes to his dear friend John Frith, "against the day we shall appear before our Lord Jesus, to give a reckoning of our doings, that I never altered one syllable of God's word against my conscience, nor would this day, if all that is in the earth, whether it be pleasure, honor or riches might be given me."

### QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Comparing England with Germany, in which country was the Reformation movement strongest, at the time of the appearance of the New Testaments of Tyndale and Luther respectively?

2. To what extent was Tyndale's translation one of the prime factors in starting the Reformation movement in England? (Compare it in this respect with Luther's translation as a factor in the German Reformation.)

3. For how many years was Tyndale an exile from his native land?

4. On what occasions did Tyndale's undertaking require quick wit, cleverness, promptness and energy?

5. With what thoughts do you suppose he comforted himself during the lonely hours of his last imprisonment?

### TO SUM UP

1. What is known about the early life of William Tyndale?
2. What two events suggested to the young man Tyndale the idea of translating the Bible into English?
3. Why did Wyclif's version no longer meet the needs of the English people?
4. What did Tyndale hope to accomplish through a new translation?

5. To whom did he first go for assistance in this work?
6. Who finally furnished the necessary funds?
7. Why did he have to leave England, in order to finish the work?
8. Where did he find protection?
9. What difficulty did he encounter in getting his New Testament printed?
10. Where and when was it finally published?
11. How were the books brought to England?
12. How many copies were distributed in England, in the course of three or four years?
13. How much of the Old Testament did Tyndale succeed in publishing in an English translation before his death?
14. Where and how did he die?
15. To what extent did Tyndale's version influence later English translations?

## CHAPTER XLIII

### A MASTERPIECE OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

#### THE ORIGIN OF THE KING JAMES VERSION

About a hundred years after Tyndale, there was published an English version of the Bible which for nearly three centuries was destined to be in a peculiar way "the Bible," and the only Bible, of the vast majority of English-speaking Christians. This was the King James Version or the so-called Authorized Version. The period between the first appearance of Tyndale's New Testament, and the publication of the King James Version (that is, 1525 to 1611), was marked by great activity in Bible translation. Many different versions appeared. As most of these exerted an influence on the translators of the King James Version it is of interest to take note of the most important of them.

#### COVERDALE'S BIBLE AND ITS SUCCESSORS

Even before Tyndale's death conditions had begun to be more favorable for the publication of an English Bible. The Reformation movement was making headway all the time. King Henry, from selfish motives, had broken with the Pope and this led him to favor the reformers. His prime minister, Thomas Cromwell, seeing in what direction the wind was blowing, had quietly engaged a prominent scholar named Miles Coverdale to prepare a translation of the Bible. This scholar was a man of about the same age as Tyndale. He had been a monk, but like Tyndale had gone over to the Reformation movement, and had been compelled to flee from England for safety. He had a rare gift for musical English, although he was not a thorough student of Greek and Hebrew, like Tyndale. He was well aware of his limita-

tions, but there seemed no chance that Tyndale's version would ever receive legal sanction, for King Henry still regarded Tyndale as a dangerous heretic. Moreover Tyndale had not yet been able to publish a complete Old Testament in English. So Coverdale modestly accepted the task. "It was neither my labor nor my desire," he says, "to have this work put in my hand" Yet "though I could not do so well as I would, I thought it yet my duty to do my best, and that with a good will." Thus there appeared in England in 1535, while Tyndale was in prison, the first complete printed English Bible, namely Coverdale's translation. In the course of the next thirty years, three versions appeared which may be classed together as the Coverdale-Tyndale group. They were combinations of Tyndale's work and Coverdale's, with minor changes. The first of these (1537) is known as Matthew's Bible. This was nothing else than Tyndale's version of the New Testament, and of the Old Testament as far as he had completed it, namely to II Chronicles, together with Coverdale's translation of the remainder of the Old Testament. It was edited by John Rogers, a close friend of Tyndale, with whom the latter had left his unfinished manuscript of the Old Testament. It bore the name of Thomas Matthew on the title-page, but this was probably an assumed name adopted by Rogers himself. There was a preface dedicating the book to King Henry, and a license was secured from him permitting copies of it "to be bought and read within this realm." How great a vindication this was for Tyndale is shown by the fact that the book not only contained all of his translation, so far as he had completed it, but also many of his marginal notes, expressing ideas to which Henry had been hostile.

It is probable that the King did not examine these notes very closely when he gave the permit to sell it, and possibly his Protestant advisers were a bit nervous on this account; for the next year the chancellor called Miles Coverdale again into service and asked him to



prepare a new edition without notes. Coverdale took as the basis of the work, not his translation of 1535, but Matthew's Bible, of which only the latter part of the Old Testament was his own work, while the rest was Tyndale's.

This second Tyndale-Coverdale version was known as the Great Bible, because of the large size of the volumes. By royal edict, a copy of this edition was set up in every church throughout the kingdom. We read that six copies were set up in convenient places in St. Paul's Church in London, and so great was the enthusiasm for reading them that it was necessary to admonish the people not to come in crowds nor to be disorderly. In spite of this, the bishop of the cathedral complained that "divers willful and unlearned persons read the same at the time of divine service, yea in the time of the sermon." Evidently many persons found the Bible more interesting than the sermon. Thus at last had Tyndale with Coverdale's help brought the entire Bible even to the boy who followed the plow.

The Psalms in the Episcopal Prayerbook as used today are taken from the Great Bible, and are from Coverdale's translation as Tyndale's work had stopped with II Chronicles. They were retained by the church authorities, in spite of many errors, because the people had come to love so much the tenderness and poetic beauty of Coverdale's wording. It was Coverdale who introduced into our Bible the expressions "loving-kindness," and "tender mercy."

A revision of the Great Bible, the third in this Tyndale-Coverdale group, was published about thirty years later, and was known as the Bishop's Bible, because a number of prominent bishops had contributed to it. This revision did not vary from the "Great Bible" in many places, and unfortunately some of the changes were not improvements. It is of interest to us chiefly because the scholars who prepared the King James Version used it as the basis of their work. It may, therefore,

be called the lineal ancestor of that version. Through it the work of Tyndale and Coverdale was handed on to future generations.

#### THE PURITAN AND ROMAN CATHOLIC BIBLES

There were two other English versions which the King James translators frequently consulted. One of these was the Geneva Bible, the work of Puritan exiles who fled to Geneva, during the reign of the Roman Catholic queen Mary (1553-1558). The other was the so-called Rheims-Douay Bible, prepared in turn by Roman Catholic exiles in France, after Mary had been succeeded by the Protestant Elizabeth.

The leading spirit in the preparation of the Geneva Bible was William Whittingham. He and his associates were thorough students and corrected many errors in the earlier versions. Many of their expressions, especially in the prophetic books, are retained in the Authorized Version. Puritan ideas were expressed in marginal notes. This was the first English version in which the Bible text was divided into chapters and verses, as at present. The Hebrew text had been so divided for many centuries. As for the Greek text of the New Testament, it is said that the verses were made by Stephen, a French scholar, associated with these English Puritans at Geneva, and inserted in his Greek Testament while he was on a journey on horseback about the year 1551. The Geneva Bible was published in 1560, in a small convenient size, and in clear Roman type rather than the old Gothic or black-letter. It became very popular with the mass of the English people. It was the Bible used by Shakespeare. Copies of it were probably brought to America by the Pilgrim Fathers, on the Mayflower.

The great influence of these various translations by Protestants finally made it necessary for the Roman Catholic leaders to prepare an English version for use among their people. The task was undertaken by

professors in the Roman Catholic Seminary for English students located at Rheims and later moved to Douay. The New Testament was issued at Rheims in 1582, and the Old Testament at Douay in 1609. Notes were added giving the Roman Catholic interpretation of disputed texts.

This translation was made not from the original Greek and Hebrew, but from the Vulgate and therefore perpetuates the errors of the Latin. However, it brought over into English much of the stateliness and dignity of the Latin, and many noble renderings in the King James Version were taken from it.

### THE MAKING OF THE KING JAMES VERSION

In January, 1604, soon after the death of Queen Elizabeth, and the accession of James I, a conference of church leaders was called by the king, to discuss certain questions of ecclesiastical policy. Among other things it was suggested that a new translation of the Bible should be made. King James at once favored the idea, partly because he was himself something of a scholar, and liked to display his attainments. He was also greatly dissatisfied with the marginal notes of the Genevan Bible which had already gained a wide circulation. The Puritan translators of this version were strongly democratic in their sentiments, and did not believe in the divine right of kings. King James pointed out two marginal notes in particular which offended him. In a note on the first chapter of Exodus, the Hebrew women were praised for resisting the tyranny of Pharaoh. In I Chron. 15:16, the narrative tells how Asa deposed his mother from being queen. The translators added in the margin that Asa ought not only to have deposed her, but should also have killed her. These notes, said King James, "savored too much of traitorous and dangerous conceits."

With the king's approval and support, the plans for a new translation were carried out. About fifty of the

leading scholars in the kingdom were selected and divided into six groups, two in Cambridge, two in Oxford, and two in London. A certain section of the Bible was given to each group, and a small committee representing all the groups went over the entire work and prepared it for the press. It was published in 1611, with a preface giving some account of the purpose of the work, and the manner in which it was done: "Truly, good Christian reader, we never thought from the beginning that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one — but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against; that hath been our endeavor, that our mark. Neither did we disdain to revise that which we had done and to bring back to the anvil that which we had hammered. But having and using as great helps as were needful and fearing no reproach for slowness, nor coveting praise for expedition we have at length through the good hand of the Lord upon us, brought the work to that pass that you see."

This version has taken its place as one of the masterpieces of English literature. Its greatness is largely due to the eagerness and good judgment with which its authors adopted for their own all that was best in earlier versions. Like the original books of the Bible this translation is therefore the product of no single individual, but rather of an epoch, and that epoch one of the greatest and noblest in English history.

To appreciate the beauty of the King James Version, we may well turn for a contrast to a selection from an attempted improvement which was published in 1768. "A gentleman of a splendid family and opulent fortune had two sons. One day the younger approached his father and begged him in the most importunate and soothing terms to make a partition of his effects betwixt himself and his elder brother. The indulgent father overcome by his blandishments immediately divided all his fortunes betwixt them." Compare this with:

"A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living."

Perhaps the best description of this great version is that of Faber. "It lives on the ear like music that can never be forgotten, like the sound of church bells which the convert hardly knows how he can forego. It is part of the national mind and the anchor of the national seriousness. The memory of the dead passes into it. The potent traditions of childhood are stereotyped in its verses. The power of all the griefs and trials of a man is hidden beneath its words. It is the representative of his best moments, and all that has been about him of soft and gentle and pure and penitent and good speaks to him forever out of his English Bible. It is his sacred thing which doubt has never dimmed and controversy never soiled."

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Make a list of the translators who contributed directly or indirectly, to the Authorized Version of 1611.
2. What reasons are there for saying that Coverdale, next to Tyndale, did more than any one else to give us our English Bible?
3. Of the various translations mentioned in this chapter, which ones were most in danger of being biased and one-sided, in their interpretations of the Bible?
4. How did the translators of the Authorized Version show the spirit of good "team-work"?
5. How were they rewarded for their work?

## TO SUM UP

1. When was the first complete English Bible printed?
2. Who was the translator?
3. How did it happen that Coverdale was asked by the English prime minister to prepare this translation?
4. What editor and translator were responsible for Matthew's Bible?
5. Who prepared the Great Bible, and of what earlier version was it a revision?
6. Why was the Great Bible so named?



7. How was this version made accessible to every one?
8. What revision of the Great Bible was used in the preparation of the Authorized Version?
9. By whom and when was the Geneva version prepared?
10. In what respects was the Geneva Bible printed differently from its predecessors?
11. Where and by whom was the Roman Catholic Bible prepared?
12. Mention one or two characteristics of this version.
13. Why did King James favor still another translation?
14. How was this translation prepared?
15. Mention some ways in which the King James or Authorized Version was indebted to both the Rheims New Testament and the Geneva Bible.
16. For how many centuries did the Authorized Version remain in almost universal use as the Bible of all English-speaking peoples?

## CHAPTER XLIV

### A QUEST FOR PERFECT ACCURACY

#### THE ENGLISH AND AMERICAN REVISIONS

Great as were the merits of the King James Version of the Bible it was inevitable that after three centuries a revision would be necessary. One reason for this was of course the gradual modification of the English language. Many words in common use in 1611 are entirely obsolete today; for example, leasing, for lying (Psalm 4:2), and daysman for umpire (Job 9:33). Other words have changed in meaning; let is no longer used in the sense of hinder (II Thess. 2:7.) Grammatical constructions have also changed; as the use of "its," where the King James Version always uses "his."

An even more important reason for a new revision was the fact that the version of 1611 was made from comparatively late and imperfect manuscripts. In chapter thirty-eight we saw that errors quickly crept into the written manuscripts of the biblical books, and that these errors gradually multiplied as time went on. The Greek manuscripts used by the King James translators all dated from as late as 800 A.D., and contained many errors.

#### THE OLDEST GREEK NEW TESTAMENTS

There were in existence, however, although inaccessible to those scholars of 1611, many copies of the Greek New Testament which were centuries older. It is fortunate for us that the parchment of which these old books were made has proved so durable. Our modern paper is perishable. Experts are in doubt whether any books of the twentieth century, even those printed on linen paper, will survive two hundred years of time. On the other

hand, the papyrus of ancient times, although its fibers were easily broken, was far more durable than the paper of today; while some of the parchment books have survived very rough treatment.

Very soon after the publication of the King James Version, some of these older and more reliable manuscripts were made available for English scholars. Since that time others have come to light. All these manuscripts, both recent and early, are now listed under certain letters or numbers, as Codex A, or Codex B, and the location of each is known to all scholars. Photographic fac-similes of the most important ones have been distributed among all the leading libraries of the world. We may mention four of them, namely codices A, B, C and Aleph. As Professor Gregory says, these stand forth among the rest, like David's four mighty men.

Codex A was given to Charles I of England by the Patriarch of Constantinople in 1628. It is now in the British Museum. It was probably written about 425 A.D.

Codex B has been in the Vatican library at Rome at least since 1475, but it is only within the last century that scholars have been permitted to see it. It was written at least as early as 350 A.D.

Codex C has been for many centuries in Paris. It belongs to a class of manuscripts known as Palimpsests. This means that sometime during the middle ages, when writing material was scarce, the monks in charge of the library, where it was kept, seeing that the ink had faded and was almost illegible, tore the leaves apart, and used them for copying other things, of little or no interest to us. Modern scholars, however, by applying chemicals, have caused the original letters to stand out more distinctly, so that with patient study most of the words may be deciphered. Only about three-fifths of the New Testament, however, is preserved. The leaves containing the remainder were doubtless thrown away.

But though it comes to us maimed and disfigured, like a traveler from a long and dangerous voyage, this manuscript bears a priceless testimony regarding the correct wording of the New Testament books. The original writing dates from about 450 A.D.

Codex Aleph, the fourth of the "mighty men," has also had a somewhat exciting history. In the year 1844 a young scholar named Tischendorf, from the University of Leipsig, visited the monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai. While there he found in a wastebasket forty-three leaves of an old manuscript, and the monks let him have them. He also saw other leaves which they refused to give him. These forty-three leaves proved to be from an old copy of the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and Tischendorf determined to get the rest of the manuscript some day if possible. Nine years later he returned to the monastery, and again fifteen years later, in 1859, he made a third visit and spent some days there without success. But the night before he was to leave, the steward of the monastery invited him to his room, and showed him a great pile of leaves of parchment, wrapped in cloth on a shelf. The steward allowed him to take the pile to his room, and he sat up all night looking at it, in an ecstasy of joy, for it proved to contain not merely the Greek Old Testament but also the New Testament complete; and to his practiced eye, it was clear that the writing was very old. The next morning he tried to get the monks to let him have it, but they refused. Ten years later (in 1869), however, it was secured from them by the Russian government, and it may now be seen in the Imperial Library at Petrograd.

This manuscript and Codex B, at the Vatican, are probably the two best Greek manuscripts so far discovered. It is believed that they both belonged to a collection of fifty Bibles prepared for the Emperor Constantine at Cæsarea, in 331, under the direction of Eusebius, the church historian. Indeed to judge from

peculiarities of the handwriting, the same scribe wrote parts of both.

In addition to these Greek manuscripts, there have recently been discovered a number of copies of very ancient translations of the New Testament. A very valuable Syriac New Testament was discovered in 1892, by two English ladies, Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Gibson, in the same monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai where Tischendorf found Codex Aleph. These ancient translations are invaluable witnesses to the correct Greek wording.

### THE SCIENCE OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Not only have we found these older and more accurate copies of the New Testament, but modern scholars have also learned to use to better advantage whatever manuscripts they may have. A new science has grown up called textual criticism, which is the science of discovering, in accordance with certain laws, the most accurate wording of ancient writings. One of the most important laws of this science is that of genealogy. When a copy is made from any manuscript, the new copy is a child, as it were, of the older one, and inherits its mistakes. Now there are about three thousand known manuscripts of the Greek New Testament, including incomplete copies. Scholars have discovered that these all belong to two or three great families, according to their differences in wording, and the value of a manuscript depends in no small degree on its family. Even though it may not be very ancient, yet if it belongs to a good family, it is more likely to be accurate than one which is older, but which comes from a less accurate ancestry.

As the fruit of an enormous amount of labor, in which these principles have been followed, revised Greek texts have been published in recent years, which probably are nearly identical with the original autograph copies of the New Testament books.



## THE ENGLISH AND AMERICAN REVISIONS

All these new manuscripts, and the scientific progress of modern scholars finally have made possible translations of the Bible which represent far more accurately the original meaning of the writers, than the King James Version. In 1870, all the leading scholars in England were invited to join in the preparation of a Revised Version. There was a committee of thirty-seven for the Old Testament, and twenty-seven for the New Testament. Meetings were held in Westminster Abbey for more than ten years. There was a similar committee in the United States, and the suggestions of these American scholars were carefully considered by the English committee. Finally in 1881, the New Testament was published. So great was the general interest that the entire New Testament in its new form was actually sent by telegraph from New York to Chicago and published in one of the newspapers. The revised Old Testament was published in 1885. These editions constitute what is known as the English Revision.

There was, however, room for further improvement, and the American committee decided to continue its organization. In 1901 they published an American Revised Version, which embodied a large number of alterations which the English committee had rejected, and also other changes.

These revised versions retain the beautiful language and wording of the King James Version so far as possible, and introduce changes only in the interests of accuracy or when they are made necessary by changes in English usage.

The Revised Version of the New Testament is much more satisfactory than that of the Old Testament. It is generally believed that much work remains to be done on the latter. This is because it is so difficult to correct the Hebrew text. We saw that all the copies of



the Old Testament books in Hebrew, except the one which the Rabbis chose for a standard, were lost or destroyed. This standard text is on the whole a very good one, but it is not perfect. There are not a few passages which really do not make sense at all, as they stand. In some places the Greek translation gives a better sense, and in many such cases it is evident that the Greek translators had a more accurate Hebrew text before them, than the one which has come down to us. Yet scholars have hesitated to use the Greek translation in correcting the Old Testament, because it also is full of errors. In recent years, however, scholars have learned how to use the Greek in spite of its errors. Several excellent translations of the Old, as well as of the New Testament, have been made by individual Biblical scholars and are already being widely and profitably used, for they are based on the established results of recent scholarship and express the thoughts of the biblical writers in clear, vigorous English idioms. We shall perhaps see in the not distant future a complete English translation of the Old Testament which will be the greatest forward step in the whole history of English Old Testament revisions.

In the meantime, the American Standard Version is widely recognized as the most accurate complete translation now current among English-speaking peoples.

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Secure a copy of the Authorized Version of the Bible, and also of the American Revision: what changes do you notice in the form of the verse division, and in the printing of the poetical books?

2. Read the preface to either the Old or the New Testament, in the American Revision: find out what are some of the distinctive features of this Revision, as compared with that of the English scholars.

3. Look up the following passages in a copy of the Authorized Version: Acts 17:22, Lk. 2:14. Acts 26:28, Matt. 6:31, I John 5:7-8. Compare the changed wording in the American Revision. Do any of these changes affect the substance of the Christian belief?

4. Do you consider such changes as the above important enough to justify the great amount of labor which made them possible?

5. There are a few passages in the Old Testament where the Hebrew wording is so badly preserved as to be quite unintelligible. What should a Bible translator do with such passages?

## TO SUM UP

1. Why did it become necessary, in modern times, to issue a Revised Version of the English Bible?

2. What names are given to the four most important Greek manuscripts of the New Testament now known?

3. State the probable date when each of these was written, and where each is now located.
4. What is a Palimpsest manuscript?
5. By whom, when, where, and how, was Codex Aleph discovered?
6. How may the ancient Syriac translation be used in determining the true wording of the New Testament?
7. By whom, when, and where was a valuable Syriac manuscript discovered?
8. Why must the genealogy as well as the age of a manuscript be considered in determining its value?
9. How many English scholars were engaged in the preparation of the English Revision?
10. How long did they hold meetings?
11. Give the dates of publication of the New and Old Testaments in the English Revision.
12. What part did American scholars have in the preparation of this revision?
13. Why did the American committee continue in the work?
14. When was the American Revision published?
15. To what extent do these revisions vary from the Authorized Version?
16. In what part of the Bible is there still need for further revision? Explain why.

## CHAPTER XLV

### THE BIBLE IN NON-CHRISTIAN LANDS

#### THE STORY OF THE MISSIONARY TRANSLATIONS

The story of the missionary translations of the Bible goes back almost to the time of the apostles. Within a century after the New Testament was completed, it had been rendered into Latin, Syriac and Coptic. Before the close of the first six Christian centuries, the Bible was known in eight languages. During the period of the Reformation this number grew to twenty-four. Then with the beginning of the nineteenth century came a wonderful development of foreign missions in almost all parts of the globe which has now continued for more than a hundred years with steadily increasing momentum. As a result, the Bible has now been translated in whole or in part into more than four hundred and fifty languages. Some of these are now obsolete; and the total number of living tongues in which the Bible is used and circulated is 432. Of these, 56 are in Europe, 50 in North and South America, 58 in Australia and the South Sea Islands, 117 in Africa, and 175 in Asia. It is estimated that seven out of every ten of the world's inhabitants have had the Gospel story provided for them in their own tongue. There are still a large number of minor languages or dialects, spoken by a limited number of people, into which the Bible has not been translated. Most of these, however, are rapidly disappearing and the people who spoke them are adopting one of the great civilized tongues. Thus the ideal set forth in the story of Pentecost has been realized. The nations of the world have heard the Gospel proclaimed, all "in their own language wherein they were born."

Even from the scientific point of view this is a remarkable achievement. The science of language, or com-

parative philology has been made possible by the labors of these devoted missionary translators. Some of them were really geniuses in this field. William Carey, the great missionary to India, was one of the greatest linguists known to history. It is said that he supervised the publication of the Bible in no less than forty different languages. Many of these translations were his own work. Elias Riggs, the American missionary to Turkey, was another genius. He had a working knowledge of twenty languages, was master of twelve, and gave the Bible to four nations. These men are only two of scores of others who might be mentioned with honor.

Nearly all of the great missionary translators were aided in their labors by a most noteworthy agency, the British and Foreign Bible Society, with its branches or allied organizations in America and elsewhere. This movement began in 1802. The attention of the Christian leaders of England had been called to the need for a wider distribution of a Welsh translation of the Bible in Wales. "Surely a society might be formed for this purpose. But if for Wales, why not for the kingdom? Why not for the world?" So spoke Rev. Joseph Hughes, a Baptist minister. And his suggestion led to the organization of the British and Foreign Bible Society, with the purpose of encouraging the wider circulation of the Bible without note or comment. This society and its sister societies have helped to support missionary translators, and have undertaken the printing of large numbers of these missionary versions. They have also kept large numbers of colporteurs or Bible salesmen in the field who in the course of the century have distributed literally hundreds of millions of Bibles, in every continent, from the frozen north, to the burning tropics.

### THE ROMANCE OF MISSIONARY TRANSLATION

The difficulties involved in the work of translating the Bible into these many languages, and the skill, persistence and heroism with which they have been over-

come, form a most fascinating story. In many cases, the missionaries were the first visitors from western civilization to the regions in which they worked, and they had to solve the mysteries of the language single handed, and unaided by interpreters. Sometimes many years passed before they succeeded in discovering all the words which were necessary for expressing the Christian message. Rev. Willis R. Hotchkiss, a missionary to Africa, says that he spent two and a half years looking for a single word. How he finally discovered it, he tells as follows: "One night my people were seated around the campfire. I listened to their stories, and finally my head-man, Kikuni, told a story from which I hoped much, a story of a man who was killed by a lion. But he never said a word which I could construe to be the one I wanted. I was about to turn away when he said 'Bwana nukuthaniwa ne Kikuni.' (The master was saved by Kikuni.) I immediately said to him 'Uku thani Bwana?' (You saved the master?) 'Yes,' said he. 'Why' said I, 'this is the word I've been wanting you to tell me all these days, because I wanted to tell you that Jesus died to ——' 'Master, I understand now!' he shouted, his black face lighting up in the lurid blaze of the campfire. 'This is what you have been trying to tell us all these moons. Jesus died to *save* us from sin.' "

#### REDUCING LANGUAGES TO WRITING

Hundreds of languages have been reduced to writing for the first time, by missionary translators. In most cases our English (i.e. Roman) letters have been found sufficient to express all the sounds. In one case, however, a most ingenious system of characters, somewhat like our shorthand, was devised. The inventor was Rev. James Evans, missionary to the Cree Indians in north-west Canada. These Indians were obliged to live by hunting and fishing, and hence could not stay long in one place. If they were to learn to read, therefore,



they needed a very simple system of letters, which, if possible, would do away with the necessity of learning to spell. The plan worked out by Mr. Evans was a great success. He made his own type out of the sheets of lead which lined the tea-chests brought in by the fur traders. For ink, he used a mixture of soot and sturgeon's oil. For paper, he used white birch-bark. In a very short time, nearly every Indian in the tribe was eagerly reading these pieces of "talking bark." Later on, a fine set of type was made, and real paper books were printed, using the new characters. These were adopted by other Indian tribes, and are said to be still in use.

#### THE LACK OF WORDS FOR BIBLE IDEAS

To express the rich and varied ideas of the Bible in a crude dialect containing perhaps only a few hundred words, is found to be a most perplexing task. Suppose we are trying to give the Bible to a tropical island in the South Seas, where the temperature never falls below the freezing point; how shall we translate into their language, Job 38: 29?

Out of whose womb came the ice?

And the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it?

Still more perplexing is the problem of finding words to express the lofty moral and spiritual truths of the Bible. For example there was no word for God in the Chinese language. The nearest approaches to it were words meaning ghosts, or the sun. The languages of heathen tribes are generally very deficient in words for righteousness or moral goodness. In the languages of Tahiti there was no word for faith. How could there be, when the whole atmosphere of their life was suspicion! In Maori there was no word for hope; they had no use for such a word; their lives were too full of *hopelessness*.

To meet these difficulties the translators sometimes coined new words, or imported words from more civilized

languages. More often, however, they took the best words they could find in the native tongue, and sought to read into them new meaning. For example, in Malagasy, the native language of Madagascar, there was no word for purity; so the translators used the word "whiteness"; and this word thus became freighted with a wealth of new meaning. In many languages there was originally no word for conscience; so the missionaries had to take some word like "meditation" and explain as best they could the new sense in which they used it. This method has proved very successful. When the Bible has been rendered into a heathen language, it has had the same result as when the truth of the Bible has entered into the heart of a human being. It has been a purifying, transforming, ennobling influence.

#### THE POWER OF THE BIBLE AS A MISSIONARY AGENCY

John G. Paton, in his autobiography, tells of the welcome which was given to his first translation of Bible books in the language of Aniwa, in the New Hebrides Islands.

" 'Missi, is it done?' said the old chief Nomakei. 'Can it speak?'

" 'Yes.'

" 'Does it speak my words?'

" 'It does.'

" 'Make it speak to me, Missi. Let me hear it speak.' I read to him a part of the book, and the old man shouted in an ecstasy of joy."

Then the missionary taught the old man his alphabet, first fitting his eyes with glasses, for he was nearsighted. And from that time on, whenever people came around him he would get out his little book. "Come," he would say; "I will let you hear how the book speaks our own Aniwan words. You say it is hard to learn to read, and make it speak. But be strong and try. If an old man like me has done it, it ought to be much easier for you."

In the Hindu province of Dacca missionary explorers

once discovered several villages of Hindu peasants, who had given up idol-worship, were renowned for their truthfulness, and were searching for a true teacher come from God. They called themselves Satya-Gooroos. When the missionaries inquired how they had come by this religion, they brought out a much worn book kept in a wooden box in one of their villages. No one could say whence it came. They only knew that they had possessed it many years. It was a copy of the Bengali New Testament, translated by William Carey.

The annals of the Bible societies contain many such incidents, showing the power of the Bible message over the human heart, even when carried by lifeless ink and paper. The Bible is a book of life. It is forever demanding to be translated and the translation into spoken or written words is but the first step. The next step, and the next, and the next, is the endless process of translation into living deeds.

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Do you consider it a good thing for humanity that more than four hundred separate languages should be perpetuated through Bible translations?

2. If in any language there were no words which possessed even a suggestion of moral and spiritual significance, would it be possible to translate the Bible into that language?

3. In view of the fact that the Bible has been translated into nearly all languages, what can you infer regarding human nature?

4. Show how the following English words have risen, or are rising from a lower to a higher meaning: honor, patriotism, love.

5. Judging from the way words and languages are changed for the better, how do you think a person's character may be made God-like?

## TO SUM UP

1. What is the total number of living languages in which the Bible is now circulated?

2. About what proportion of the inhabitants of the earth have had the Gospel story provided for them in their own language?

3. Since about what date has the largest part of this work been done?

4. Mention two men of genius as linguists, who did notable work as missionary translators.

5. Give an account of the history of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

6. Tell something about the work of this society, and other Bible Societies in America and elsewhere.

7. How do missionaries proceed to learn a language previously unknown to the civilized world?

8. What must be done in case the language has never been reduced to writing?

9. What difficulties are encountered in the attempt to express the ideas of the Bible in the languages of heathen tribes?

10. How are these difficulties met?

11. What is the effect of a translation of the Bible upon a language?

12. How effective is a Bible translation as a missionary agency, even apart from living missionaries?

## CHAPTER XLVI

### THE BIBLE AND THE SPADE

#### THE DISCOVERIES OF MODERN ARCHÆOLOGY

In many ways the century in which we are living is the greatest century of Bible study that the world has yet seen. Not only do we have an accurate and beautiful translation of the Bible in English; not only have similar translations been made into nearly all modern languages; but a flood of new light has been shed on the meaning of the Bible, especially by the wonderful discoveries of those patient investigators who with pick and spade have gradually been uncovering the buried ruins of the civilizations of Bible times. The story of their labors is a romance in itself.

#### DECIPHERING THE HIEROGLYPHICS OF ANCIENT EGYPT

All through the Middle Ages, travelers from Europe stood in amazement before the pyramids, temples and monuments of Egypt, and looked in puzzled wonder at the many strange inscriptions upon them. These were evidently a kind of picture-writing, but the meaning was an absolute mystery.

A clue to the solution of the problem was not found until 1799. In that year some engineers connected with Napoleon's army discovered a large slab of black granite on which an inscription was carved in three languages, in parallel lines, one of which was Greek; the other two appeared to be different forms of Egyptian. This famous fragment of rock is called the Rosetta stone. (Now in the British Museum.) Of course the Greek was quickly spelled out and translated; it proved to be a decree by Egyptian priests in honor of Ptolemy V and his queen Cleopatra. But even with the Greek as a key, it was no easy matter to decipher the Egyptian



words in the parallel lines. Where did the words begin and end? Were they spelled out alphabetically, or was there a special sign for each word as in Chinese? The answers to all these questions were finally found by a French scholar, Champollion. He heard about the Rosetta stone in 1802, when he was a boy of 11, and even from this early age, his chief ambition in life was the decipherment of that wonderful unknown language. He first succeeded in identifying certain proper names, such as Alexander, Ptolemy and Cleopatra and then used these to work out the other words. When he died in 1832, he had translated many Egyptian texts, and had gathered the necessary facts for an Egyptian grammar and lexicon.

Since then, the scholars of the world have gradually laid before us the whole story of the ancient Egyptian life, which influenced Hebrew history at so many points. We have found inscriptions of old Ramses II, the king who "knew not Joseph," and have read his own account of the great buildings on which his serfs were compelled to labor. We have unearthed his store-city Pithom, built by the Hebrews, and we find that the upper layers of bricks are in part "without straw." We even have his body preserved as a mummy.

We are also given a much fuller knowledge of the concrete life out of which all the events grew, of which we read in the books of Genesis and Exodus. Thus the Bible narratives are not only confirmed and verified, but are made more real to our imagination, and more full of human interest.

### THE STORY OF THE CUNEIFORM INSCRIPTIONS

There was another unknown script, by which European travelers in the Orient were long puzzled. The Arabs call it *mismari*, or nail-writing. The usual term for it is cuneiform or wedge-shaped writing. The illustration facing page 118, will show the appropriateness of these names. Inscriptions in these wedge-shaped characters

were observed in Persia as early as 1472 by Josaphat Barbaro, a Venetian traveler, and by others, but until modern times this writing was as unintelligible as the Egyptian. The scholars who undertook to decipher it were not fortunate enough to find a key like the Rosetta stone, with sentences in Greek running parallel with the unknown writing. It was rightly surmised, however, that the majority of these Persian inscriptions must represent the Persian language, which was already known in another form. Early in the nineteenth century, the great German scholar Grotefend, by patient effort distinguished certain recurring groups of characters, which he thought were records of Persian kings. This group of characters he surmised might correspond to the Persian words meaning "great king, king of kings." It turned out that he had found the clue to the labyrinth, and soon many of these Persian inscriptions were deciphered and translated.

There were other cuneiform inscriptions, however, in which the same characters were used, but out of which no Persian words could be made, and which were evidently in another language. This, as we now know, was Babylonian or Assyrian, a language which the human race had wholly forgotten for more than a thousand years. Already, however, inscriptions had been found which were written both in Persian and in Babylonian, and now that the sounds of many of the cuneiform characters had been discovered, these parallel inscriptions soon gave up their secrets to a number of brilliant scholars working independently. One of the most famous of them was an English army officer, Sir Henry Rawlinson. In the Zagros mountains in Persia, near where Rawlinson was at one time stationed, there is an enormous Persian-Babylonian inscription carved on the face of the Behistun precipice, 500 feet above the level of the plain, with characters from eleven to twelve feet high. Rawlinson copied part of this inscription with the aid of a field-glass, in 1835, and later risked his life climbing the face

of the cliff and finishing his copy. In 1846 he published a translation of the Persian text, and in 1851 a translation of 112 lines of the Babylonian text. He also made a transliteration of the Babylonian words into English letters showing how they should be pronounced. Thus the ancient speech of the Tigris-Euphrates valley had now come to life again, on the lips of these tireless scholars.

At about the same period, excavations were undertaken on the great mounds near the Tigris river, in the territory of ancient Assyria, by the French consul, Botta, an Englishman named A. H. Layard, and others. The earth had scarcely been scratched, before wonderful sculptured images and monuments began to come to light, covered with cuneiform inscriptions. Ere long, the explorers found themselves standing amidst the uncovered ruins of palaces which had been the pride of the conquerors of the world. It was hard to believe that the original inhabitants had been dead three thousand years: so striking were the traces of their every-day life; *e.g.*, bake-shops, wine-cellars, and agricultural implements. Some of the iron tools were so well preserved that they could still be used, and were used, in the excavations. The excitement of these discoveries stirred the world. Even the ignorant Arab workmen caught the spirit. One day when the English explorer Layard was visiting a neighboring sheikh, some distance from the excavations, he observed two Arabs approaching on horseback at top speed. "Hasten, O Bey," they exclaimed, "hasten to the diggers, for they have found Nimrod himself. Wallah it is wonderful, but it is true! We have seen him with our eyes. There is no God, but God." Returning with them, Layard found that they had indeed unearthed an enormous winged lion with a human head, which they thought must be an image of Nimrod himself. It is now in the British Museum.

Among the greatest of these discoveries, in its relation to our knowledge of the Bible, was an entire library of inscribed clay tablets, the library of the Assyrian

ruler, Asshur-banipal. (Discovered about 1850.) Since that time, in the face of danger from disease, and from hostile Arab tribes, similar excavations have been made in many places in the Tigris-Euphrates valley. An enormous quantity, literally ship-loads, of carvings and clay tablets and other material, has been found.

Something of what this has meant to Bible students, we have already seen in the preceding chapters of this book. As a result of these discoveries, we have the Babylonian Deluge story, which throws much light on the origin of the story of Noah in the Bible. We have the law-code of Hammurabi, similar in many ways to the early Hebrew law-codes. We have the personal memoirs of Shalmanezar, Tiglath-Pilezer, Sargon, Sennacherib, Nebuchadrezzar, and other Assyrian and Babylonian kings mentioned in the Bible, giving their own versions of their relations with the people of Israel, and mentioning by name, many of the Hebrew kings, such as Omri, Jehu and Hezekiah. In short, it was not merely dead languages which came to life when the cuneiform and the Egyptian scripts were deciphered; rather has a dead world come to life, the larger world of that ancient civilization of which the little nation of Israel was in some ways a very small but exceedingly important part.

#### EXPLORATIONS IN PALESTINE

One might suppose that it would be the sacred soil of Palestine itself to which the explorer would turn most eagerly with his spade, and from which the most precious relics of the past would be recovered. Unfortunately the climate of Palestine, with its annual rainy season, is not favorable to the preservation of written records, or even of buildings. Yet many interesting finds have been made, among them being the conduit or water tunnel, built by King Hezekiah to bring water to the Pool of Siloam, inside the city walls. (II Kings 20:20.) In the year 1880 some boys were swimming in this ancient

pool, and venturing up into the conduit a little distance, they discovered a Hebrew inscription. This gives an account of the building of the tunnel. It tells how the two parties of workmen worked toward each other from either end, and how when they were about three cubits apart, they could hear each other's voices through the rock.

Another famous discovery in Palestine is the so-called Moabite stone. (See illustration facing page 366.) This large piece of basalt was found in 1868, in Moab, by a German missionary named Klein. When he tried to secure it for the British Museum, the native Arabs broke it in pieces, thinking there must be treasure inside. Most of the pieces were recovered and patched together, and it is now in the Louvre, in Paris. The inscription is from Mesha, king of Moab, who is mentioned in II Kings 4:4-27. It gives Mesha's own story of his wars against Omri and Ahab, kings of Israel. He corroborates the narrative in the book of Kings.

Much has also been done in Palestine to identify the exact sites where the events of Bible history took place. Explorers in Galilee have rediscovered many of the villages in which Jesus worked, as Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. The ruins of an ancient synagogue have been excavated on the site of Capernaum; and some of the foundation stones may have been a part of the very building in which Jesus preached.

#### EGYPTIAN PAPYRI

Of all the countries in the world, the special paradise of the archæologist with his spade, is Egypt, for not only was this country the home of one of the most ancient of human civilizations, but it is a country where rain is almost unknown, and where the atmosphere, from one year's end to another, is as dry as the desert-sands by which the land is surrounded. This has made possible the discovery of an almost inexhaustible mine of buried papyri, which we have just begun to appreciate. These



come from old heaps of waste paper. It seems to have been the custom in Egypt not to burn waste papers, but to dump them outside the town limits, and let the sand sweep over them and bury them. As time went on, more rubbish of this kind would accumulate and in turn be buried. Near the site of every ancient Egyptian village, therefore, we can dig down today, through layer after layer of these rubbish heaps, sometimes hundreds of feet deep.

The most important discoveries thus far come from early Christian times. There is one precious sheet, very badly torn, which must have given its discoverers a thrill of delight, when they read thereon the two words: "Jesus saith." (See illustration facing page 372.) Among the sayings of Jesus recorded on this papyrus are some already included in the New Testament. There are also new ones, and a few which are so full of deep meaning that many believe them to be genuine utterances of the Great Teacher. Thus, "Jesus saith: Wherever there are two, they are not without God, and where there is one only, I say I am with him. Raise the stone and thou shalt find me; cleave the wood and there am I."

The large majority of the documents in this enormous mass are of the sort that one would expect to find in a sack of waste paper nowadays, and at first sight are utterly uninteresting. Among them are bills, receipts and other business forms, official notes from lawyers' offices, almanacs, and private letters from people of all degrees of culture. Yet the explorers at work at this task have carefully pieced together every torn and tattered scrap, and have published many volumes containing photographic copies of them. Surely a monumental waste of labor, one might say. Why should you and I care to know, for example, that some obscure person named Marcellus, in some obscure Egyptian village, paid his landlord six shillings rent, on such and such a date? And yet, out of this great mass of seemingly useless bits of writing we have learned one fact of the greatest importance



regarding the language of the New Testament, a fact which is worth all the labor that has been expended.

Scholars have long been puzzled by the great difference between the Greek of the New Testament, and all other Greek books. Not only does it differ from the earlier classical authors, such as Plato and Xenophon, but it differs almost as greatly from Greek authors such as Plutarch and Josephus, who wrote at about the same general period as the New Testament. The older explanation of these differences was that the apostles wrote in the language of the Holy Ghost: that is, a language which was never in common use, but was set apart as it were, for the sacred Book.

We now know, however, from our study of these papyri from Egyptian waste-baskets, that the language of the apostles was nothing else than the tongue of the common people; the language which they used in their homes and in the market-places. The other writers of that day, Josephus for example, tried to imitate the so-called classical authors, and their style is stilted and unnatural. But the New Testament writers had the good sense to avoid any such archaic, out-of-date language, and use the every-day speech of the people. Thus once again we see that the Bible has been from the very beginning the book of the common people, adapted to their understanding and needs.

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Judging from this chapter, to what extent does success in the field of archæology depend upon luck, and to what extent on persistent effort?

2. Can you think of any further information about Bible history which may possibly be given to the world through archæology?

3. Will it be gained through good fortune, or by hard work, or both?

4. To what extent does success in other fields that you are familiar with depend upon luck, and to what extent on persistent effort?

## TO SUM UP

1. What is meant by the Rosetta stone?
2. How did it furnish a clue to the meaning of the Egyptian characters?
3. By whom was the Egyptian language deciphered?
4. What new information regarding Old Testament history has been gained through the excavations in Egypt, and the study of the Egyptian inscriptions?
5. What ancient languages were written in cuneiform characters?
6. Explain the appropriateness of this name cuneiform.
7. By whom, and how, were the Persian cuneiform inscriptions deciphered?
8. Describe the great inscription on the Behistun cliff.

9. By whom was it copied, and explain how it made possible the decipherment of the ancient Babylonian language.

10. Mention two men who were pioneers in excavating the ruins of Nineveh, and other cities in the Tigris-Euphrates valley.

11. What were some of their important discoveries?

12. What new information about the Bible has been obtained through the cuneiform inscriptions?

13. Give an account of the Siloam tunnel and inscription.

14. What is the Moabite stone? By whom and when was it discovered?

15. In what way have great quantities of Egyptian papyri been preserved from ancient times?

16. What important discoveries have been made through the excavation of these papyri?

## CHAPTER XLVII

### THE BIBLE, SCIENCE AND RELIGION

#### REDISCOVERING HUMAN ELEMENTS IN THE BIBLE BOOKS

Within the last generation the ideas of most persons about the Bible have greatly changed. Formerly it was regarded as an infallible authority on all subjects. The final and conclusive argument in all questions, was "the Bible says so." Questions of science and politics, as well as of morals and religion, were decided by "proofs of Holy Writ." Pro-slavery preachers in the United States quoted the story of Noah and Canaan, and the words, "Cursed be Canaan." Many books have been written by temperance advocates to prove that Jesus did not use wine, but unfermented grape juice. It was supposed, of course, that whatever the Bible taught on any subject, was absolutely binding on us today.

This attitude toward the Bible, however, has always been beset with difficulties. The early Greek and Roman opponents of Christianity were quick to point out inconsistencies in the various Bible narratives, and called attention to certain passages in the Old Testament which reflect crude and undeveloped moral ideas, and which impute to the Almighty human passions and weaknesses such as the command to destroy all the Canaanites without mercy, both men, women and children. The early Christian leaders met these objections by interpreting the Bible allegorically. For example, the list of Canaanite kings in Joshua was explained as a list of sins. This method of explanation served its purpose very well in those days, and helped many a Christian to keep his faith in the truth of the Bible. Unfortunately "if you once begin such a system," as old St. Agobard of Lyons remarked, "who can measure the absurdity which will follow?" There are no limits except the powers of the

human imagination. The ass on which the Saviour rode into Jerusalem on his triumphal entry, was explained as the Old Testament, and the ass's colt as the New Testament. The Shunamite maiden who was selected to cherish David in his old age, was made to represent divine wisdom. The condemnation of the serpent to eat dust was explained as typifying the sin of curiosity, since in eating dust he "penetrates the obscure and shadowy." The drunkenness of Noah was even made to typify the sufferings and death of Christ.

In the time of the Reformation, the greatest leaders, such as Luther and Calvin, turned away from all such vagaries, and insisted that the Bible must be interpreted in its plain, literal sense. This, however, brought back the old difficulties arising from the inconsistencies and the primitive ideas in some of the Bible narratives.

The old tendency to regard the Bible as an absolutely infallible book has been gradually modified in modern times through the development of science and a more careful study of the Bible itself. As long ago as the Reformation, Galileo and Copernicus laid the foundations of modern astronomy, showing that the earth is round, and that it revolves around the sun, not the sun around the earth. This new theory aroused a storm of criticism. Luther called Copernicus a fool. Galileo was tried for heresy by the Roman Church, and was forced to renounce his belief that the earth moves, although under his breath he kept saying, "Yet it does move." Even down to recent times many persons have refused to accept these teachings of astronomy, because the Bible speaks of "the corners of the earth."

After astronomy came geology. The first chapter of Genesis tells us that the earth was created in six days; but the pioneers in geology, such as Lyell, found in the rocks themselves unmistakable traces of a history extending over millions of years. And then came Darwin and his theory of evolution, according to which man himself was not created outright from a lump of clay,

through the vitalizing breath of God, as described in Genesis, but was evolved from a form similar to the lower animals of today, the process extending over hundreds of thousands of years. Again there was a great outcry against these new ideas, which were said to be contrary to the Bible. It was indeed a painful position in which Christians found themselves. Some closed their eyes to the facts of science, and clung to the Bible. Others accepted science, and felt compelled to give up altogether their faith in the Bible and in Christianity.

Then there began a quiet movement on the part of a few scholars, here and there, who neither denounced the Bible as false, nor defended it as infallible, but simply asked, What are these books which are grouped together as the Bible? Judging from the evidence of the language in the books themselves, and the testimony of other writers, when were they written, by whom, and in what circumstances? As long ago as the days of Louis XIV, in France (about 1700), a physician named Astruc, a Roman Catholic, wrote a book showing from the varying use of the words Jehovah and God, that two documents were used in the Pentateuch. In the nineteenth century, this kind of investigation grew to be an independent science. Among the pioneers was a German professor named DeWette, who was driven out of Germany for his writings, and compelled to take refuge in Switzerland. This new science seems to show that the Bible is a very human book. The laws of Moses are now seen to be the product of centuries of experience on the part of the Hebrew people, and were impressed on the minds and hearts of the Hebrew people rather than written on tables of stone. The prophets were great reformers, preachers of righteousness, pointing out to the people of their own generation their injustice to the weak, and their disloyalty to Jehovah. They were not primarily concerned with the prediction of future events although they often warned their hearers of the future conse-



quences of their sins, and promised future rewards for right conduct.

We cannot wonder that some were disturbed by this new interpretation of the Bible. "If the Bible is not true from cover to cover," they said, "then who knows whether or not any of it is true? Let us have nothing to do with it."

On the other hand, many more accepted these new ideas, and suddenly discovered that to them the value of the Bible had been extraordinarily increased. Though they no longer expected to find it a textbook in natural science, nor in all its parts equally authoritative even in matters of morals and religion, yet they have found it their chief source of inspiration for right living. They have seen that it is no less a divine book for being so thoroughly human. Just as God's spirit has found expression through certain great souls, in all ages, and supremely in Jesus Christ, so in the Bible writings, we see God's truth becoming more and more perfectly expressed in human words, and supremely in the great passages of the prophets, psalmists, evangelists and apostles. We see that the authors of the Bible were men and women of "like passions with ourselves," subject to the same temptations, sharing the same weaknesses, in need of the same divine help, and we see more clearly than before how near God is to each of us. Though he is infinite Goodness, he is yet willing to dwell in the hearts of imperfect and faulty human beings, in order to make them like himself. He is eager to seek even a broken and stammering expression of his truth in the utterances of weak and erring human lips, in order that this utterance may grow ever clearer, and more splendid, as the dim light of early dawn gradually grows into the glory of perfect day.

## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. What is the difference between reading the Bible, and studying the Bible?
2. Make a list of two or three rules, as to how to study the Bible.
3. Apply your rules to the following passages:
  - (a) Psalm 19: 4-6.
  - (b) Rev. 13: 11-18.
  - (c) Matt. 5: 39.

## TO SUM UP

1. How did the early Christians explain those passages in the Old Testament, which seemed on a lower moral level than the teachings of Jesus?
2. What is the difficulty with this method of interpretation?
3. Why was Galileo denounced by the church authorities for his discoveries in astronomy?
4. How did the science of geology seem in conflict with the Bible?
5. Why was it difficult for many Christians to accept Darwin's theory of evolution?

6. According to many modern Bible students how did the biblical books originate: in a natural way like other books, or otherwise?

7. What theory about the Bible is made impossible by all these scientific discoveries?

8. Why does the Bible seem to many persons more helpful and more truly inspired, when they think of it as written by men like ourselves?

## CHAPTER XLVIII

### A SURVEY OF THE STORY OF OUR BIBLE

1. On what writing material were Paul's letters originally written?
2. What was probably the earliest New Testament book?
3. What was the general purpose which called out Paul's letters to his churches?
4. Which of Paul's letters were written while he was in active missionary work, and which were written during his imprisonment?
5. Before the Gospel narratives were written, how was the knowledge of Jesus' words and deeds preserved?
6. Which of the four Gospels is the oldest?
7. To what extent is the Gospel of Matthew really the work of Matthew the publican, Jesus' disciple?
8. How does Luke's Gospel reveal the point of view of a physician?
9. What New Testament books were written to encourage the Christians when they were persecuted by the Roman government?
10. What misunderstandings of Paul's teaching are corrected in the Epistles of James, II Peter and Jude?
11. Why did the author of I John insist that "whosoever loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God; he that loveth not, knoweth not God"?
12. Why is the term "spiritual Gospel," especially appropriate to the Gospel of John?
13. Against what opponents did the author of this Gospel seek to show that Jesus is "the Christ, the son of God"?
14. Between what approximate dates were all the New Testament books written?

15. What literary fragments in the Old Testament are from the earliest period in Hebrew history?

16. What passages of connected history, in the Old Testament, are probably the oldest?

17. How do you account for the similarity between some of the stories in Genesis and certain stories from Babylonia?

18. What period of Hebrew history was covered by the Judean-Ephraimite history, and what were some of its main teachings?

19. In what period of Hebrew history did the various Old Testament decalogues originate, and what moral spirit do they express?

20. Why is it that the Pentateuch contains such a great number of laws as well as historical narratives?

21. Which of the prophetic books in the Old Testament was the earliest?

22. Who were the four prophets who wrote between 750 and 700 B.C., and what was their great revolutionary idea?

23. Name the great prophet who witnessed the downfall of Jerusalem, and tell who wrote his biography.

24. What group of historians gave us the historical books Joshua to II Kings, in their present form, and what was their chief purpose?

25. What are the most important prophetic writings in the Old Testament which were written after the destruction of Jerusalem, and how do they differ from earlier prophetic utterances?

26. What were the main teachings of the "Second Isaiah"?

27. What two Hebrew hymn and prayer-books are found in the Old Testament?

28. By what class among the Jews, and at about what period in Old Testament history were most of those psalms probably written which are prayers for protection against enemies?

29. What Old Testament historical books were written to glorify the temple at Jerusalem, and what part of them is most valuable as history?

30. What differing attitudes toward foreigners is expressed in the stories of Esther and Jonah?

31. Explain what it is that you love and admire in the story of Ruth.

32. What Old Testament books and what two apocryphal books were written by the "Wise Men"?

33. Which of these books is a representative collection of the sayings of this class of Hebrew teachers?

34. What great longing of the human heart is portrayed, and what great problem of the human mind is discussed, in the book of Job?

35. Why was the author of Ecclesiastes a pessimist?

36. How was he answered by Ben Sira, and how by the author of the Wisdom of Solomon?

37. Point out the similarities between the books of Daniel and Revelation, as regards the circumstances of their origin, and their general character.

38. Give a brief account of the successive steps by which the present books of the Old and New Testaments came to be accepted as canonical.

39. How did the early Christians get copies of the Bible to read?

40. Into what languages was the Bible translated during the first three or four centuries of our era?

41. When and by whom was the entire Bible first translated into English?

42. What causes led to an enormous increase in Bible reading in nearly all the countries of Europe, between the years 1500 and 1600 A.D.?

43. In what respects was Luther's Bible superior to the earlier German versions?

44. When was the first printed English New Testament brought to England, and by whom had it been translated?

45. Give a brief account of Tyndale's life.

46. What English translations were consulted and to some extent copied, by the translators of the Authorized or King James Version?

47. Mention two reasons why it became necessary to prepare a Revised Version.



48. What is Codex Aleph? By whom, and how, was it discovered?

49. Into how many languages has the Bible now been translated?

50. What new light has been thrown on the Bible in modern times by archæology, and by a careful study of the origin of the biblical books?





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